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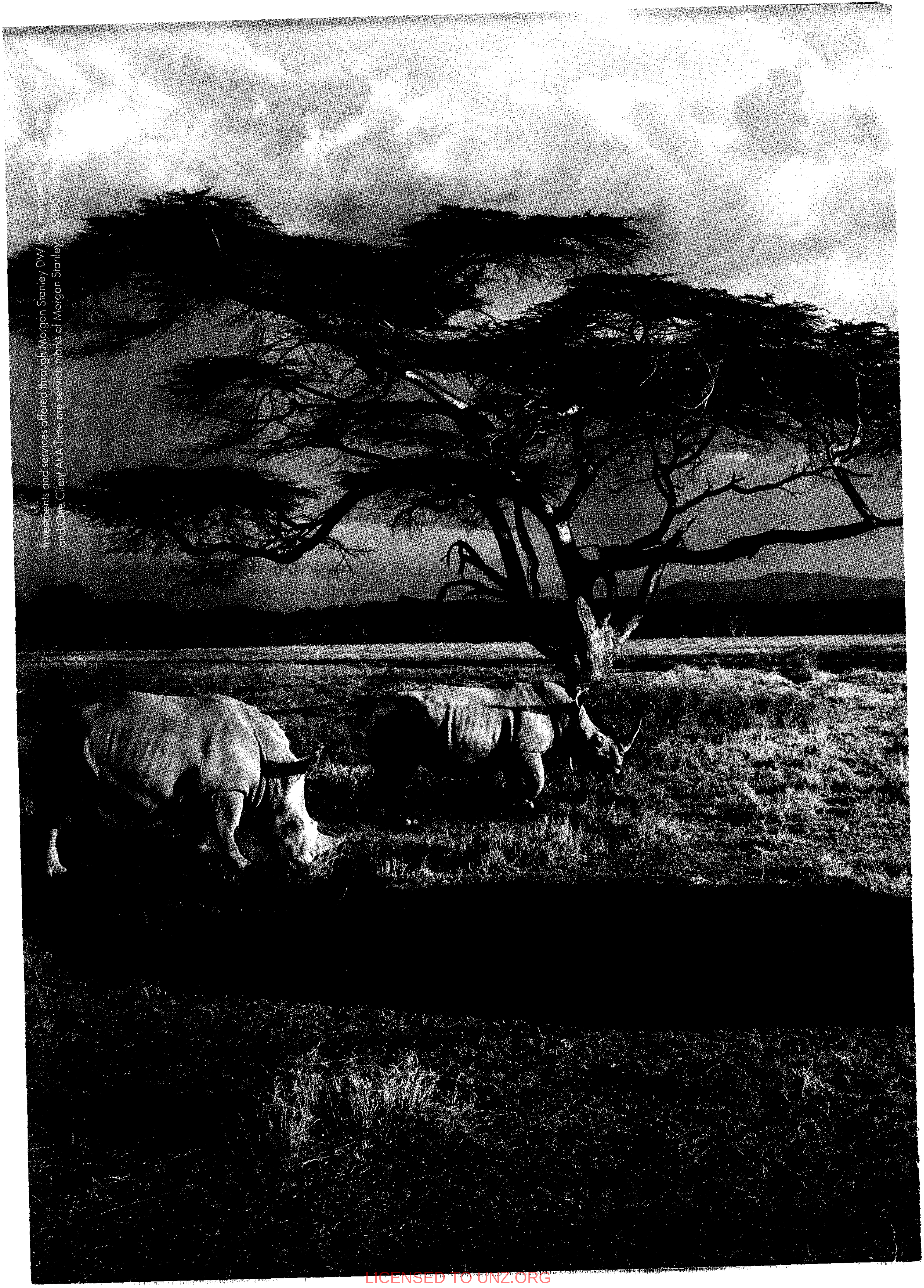
JUNE 13 & 20, 2005



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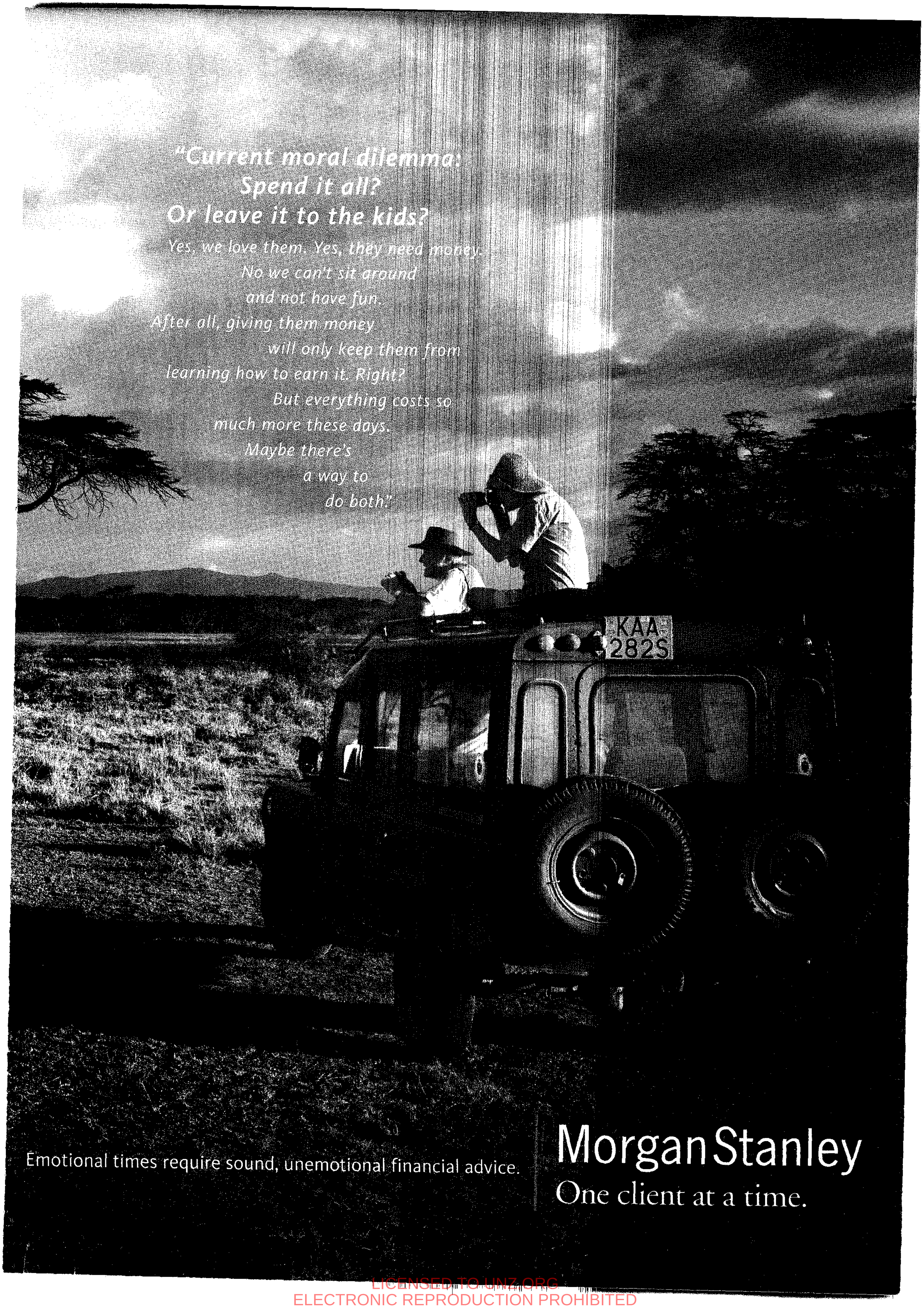
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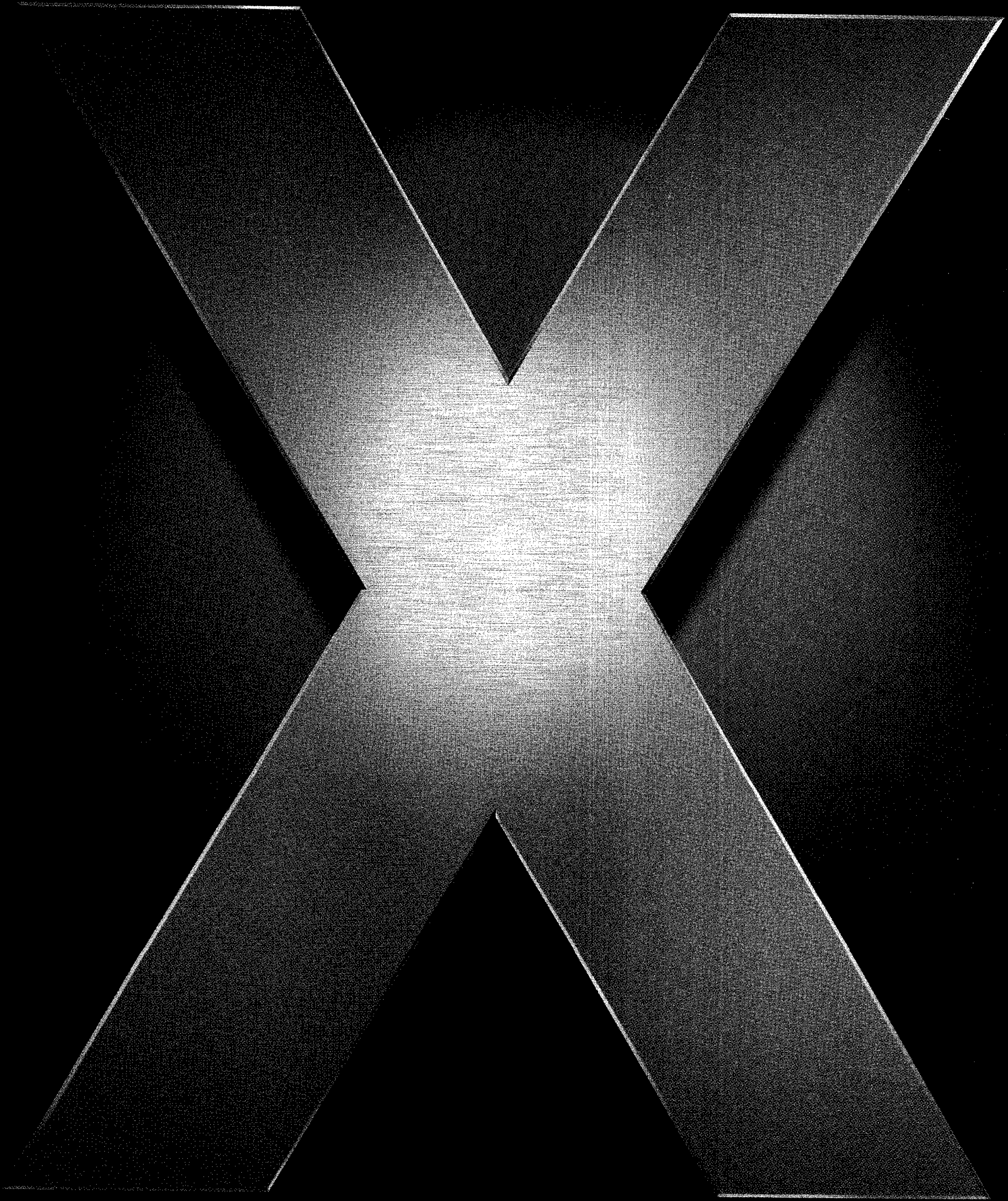

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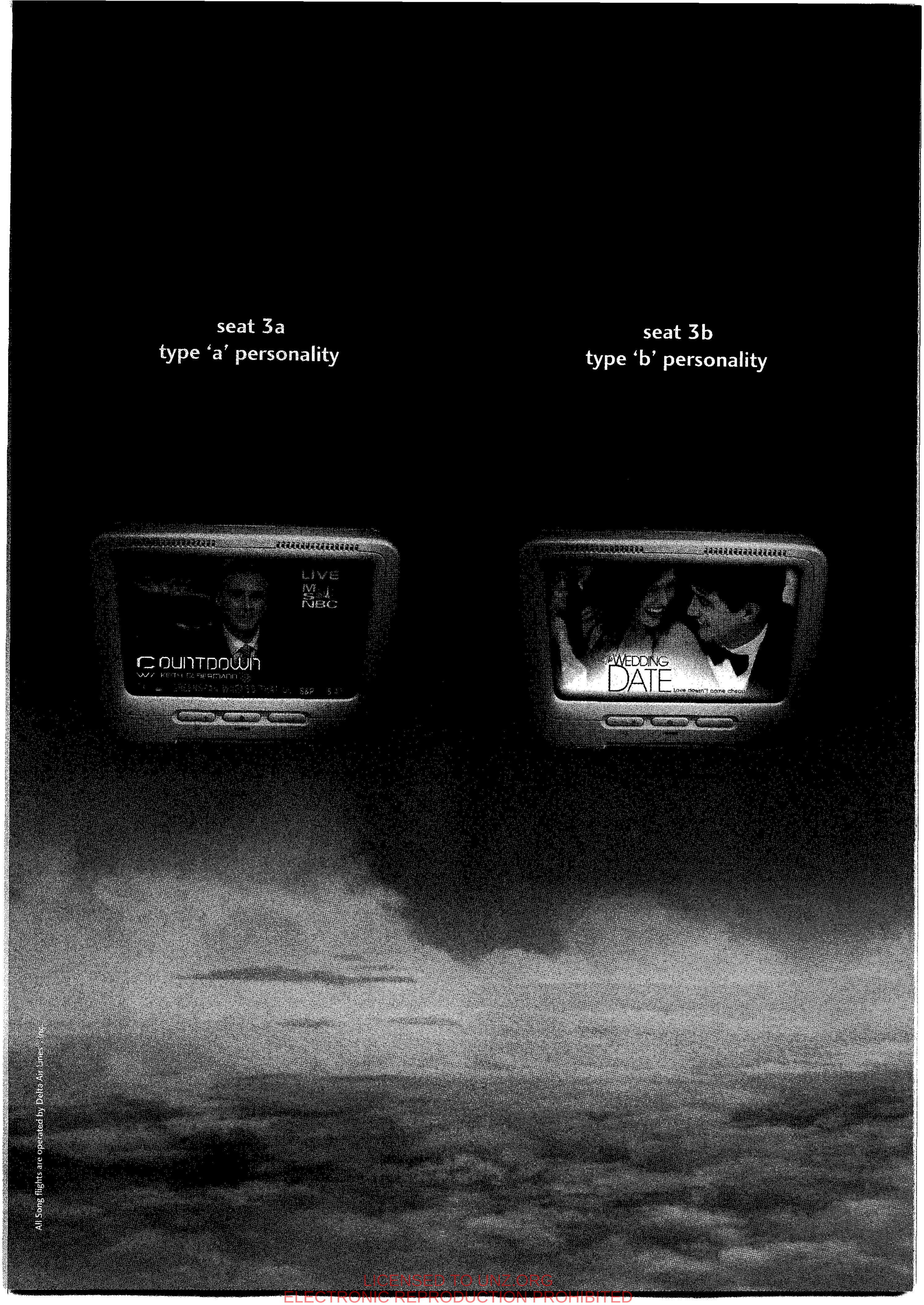
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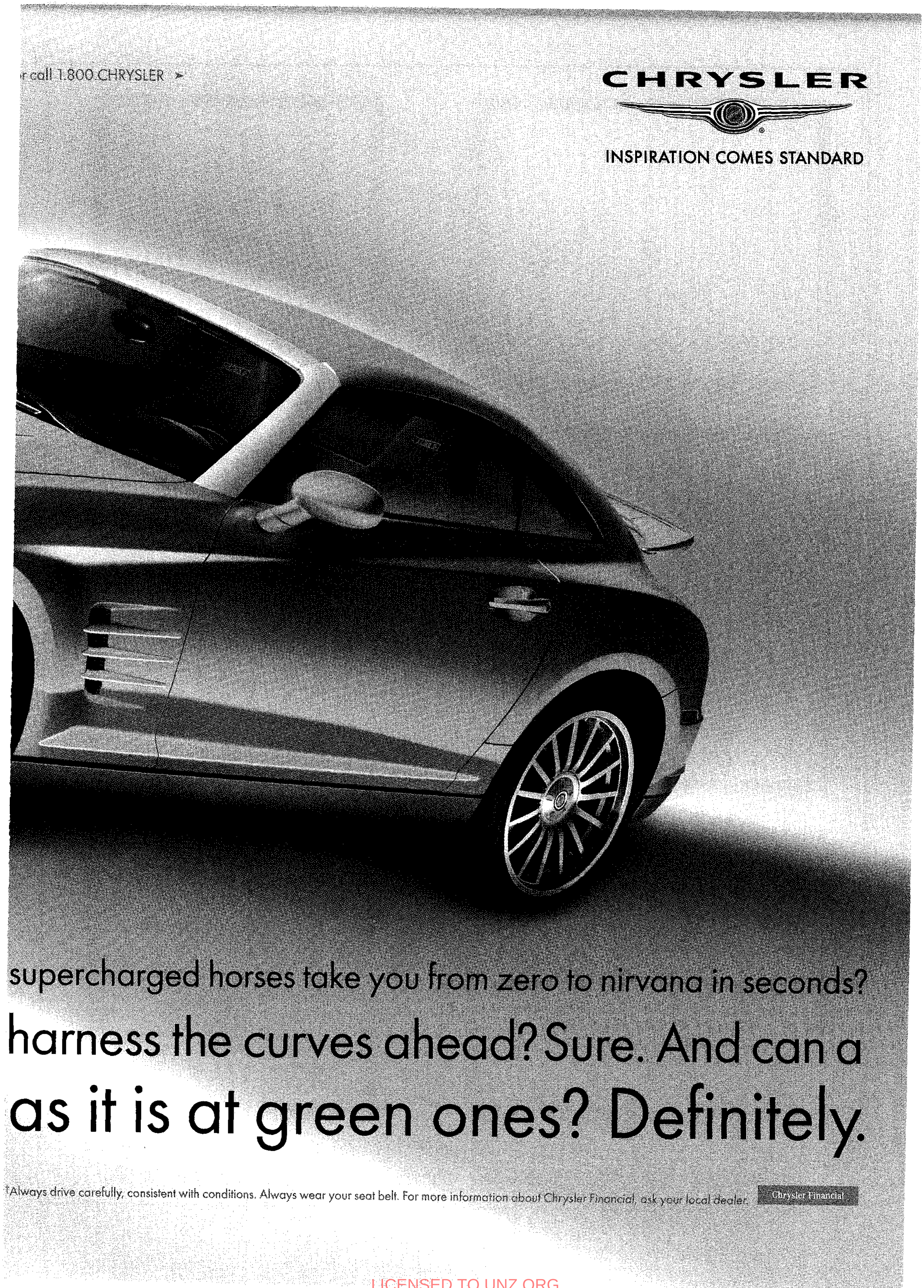

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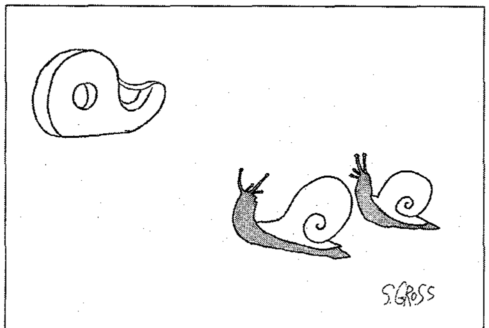
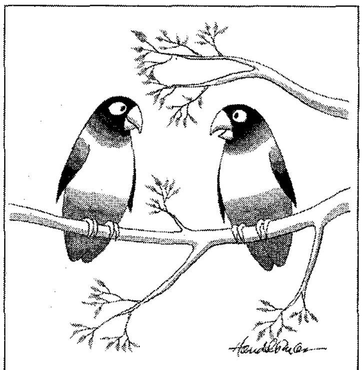


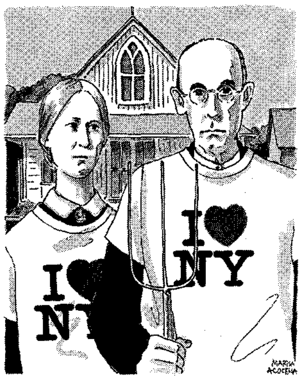
"I don't care if she is a tape dispenser, I love her."

SAM GROSS 1998



"Of course I love you—I'm programmed to love you. I'm a goddam lovebird."

J.B. HANDELSMAN 1993



MARISA ACOCELLA 2001

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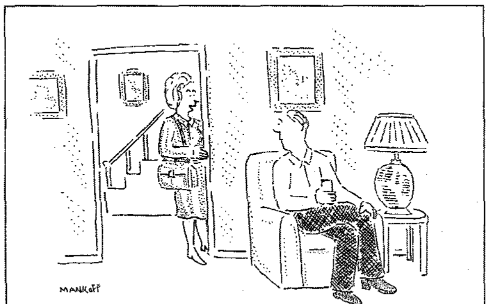
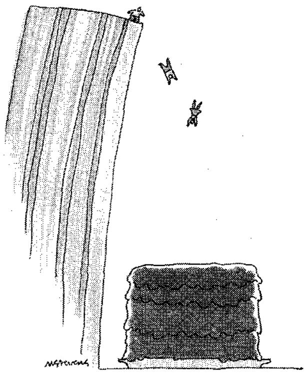


"Hey, I'm in the mood for love— be back in a few hours."

ROBERT MANKOFF 2001



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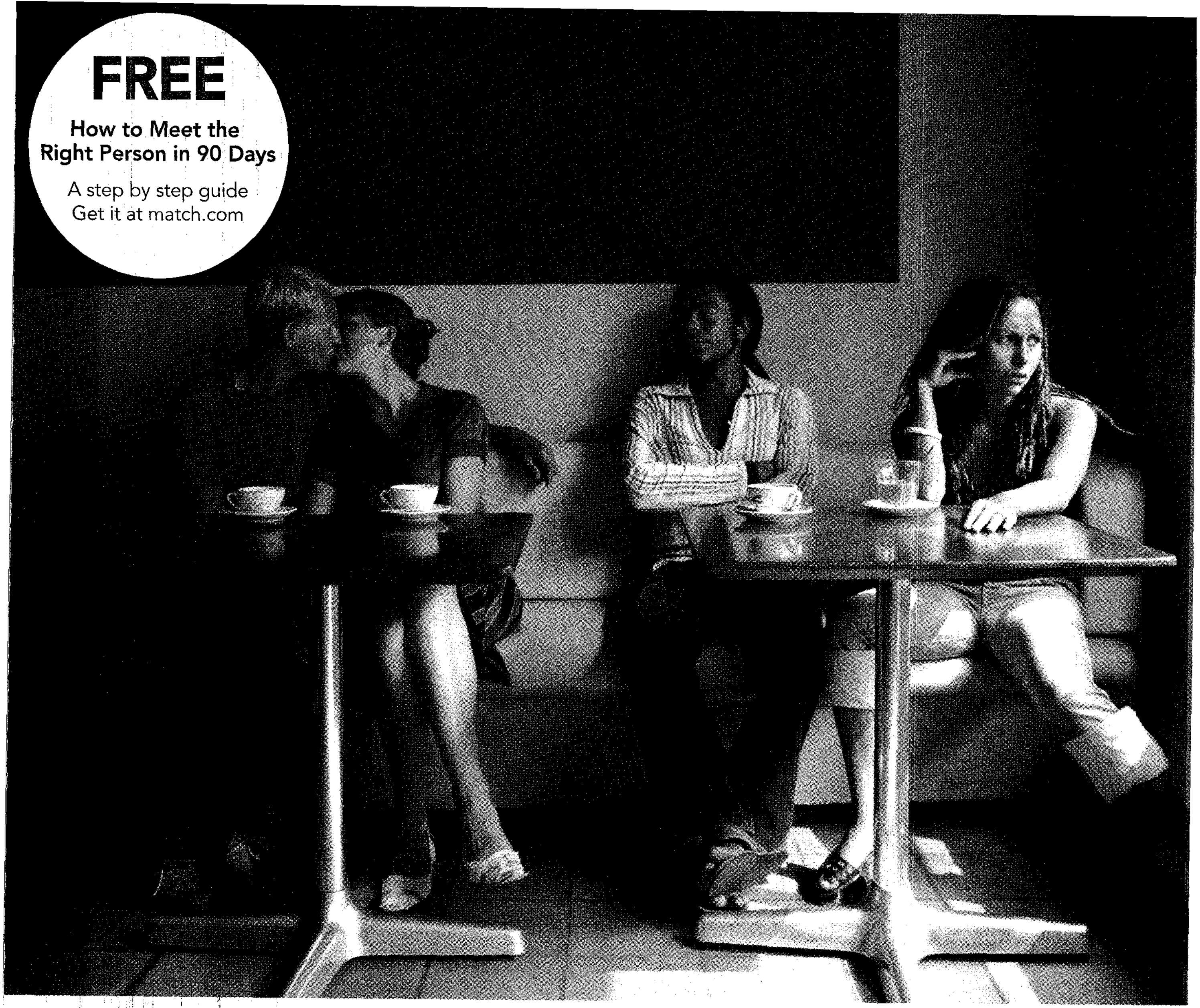

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Valerie couldn't help but read
the really bad parts of the novel
out loud.

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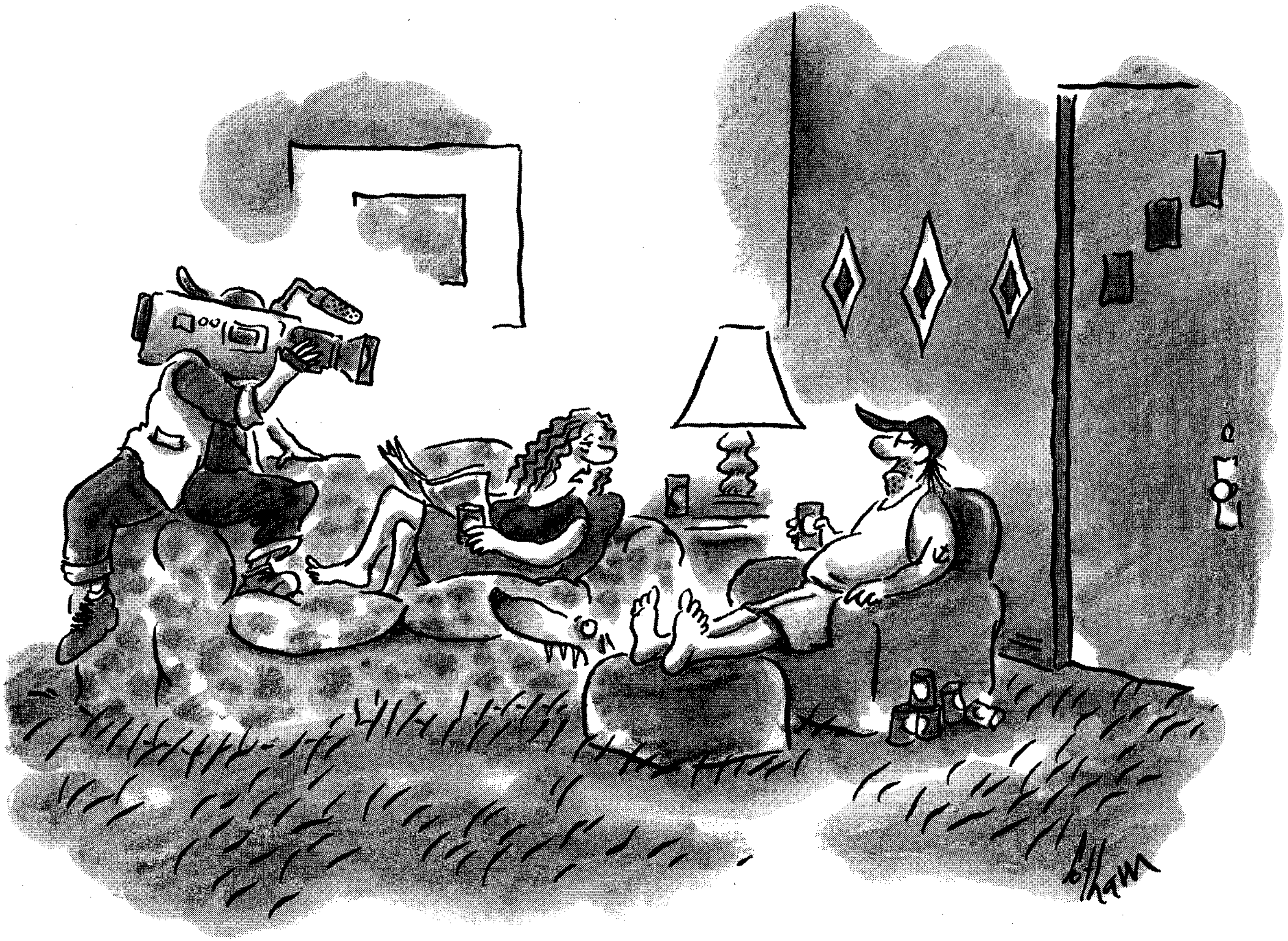

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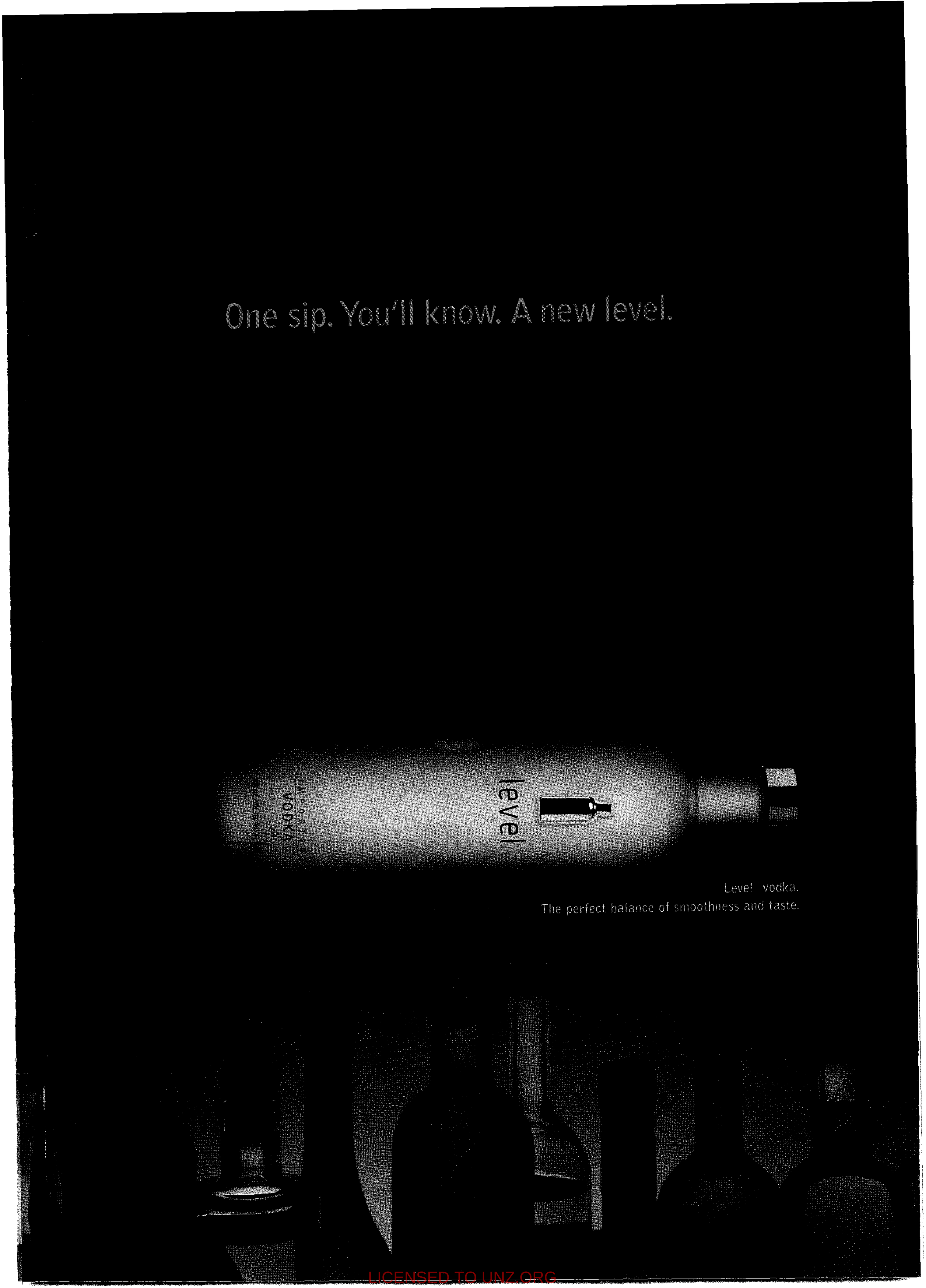
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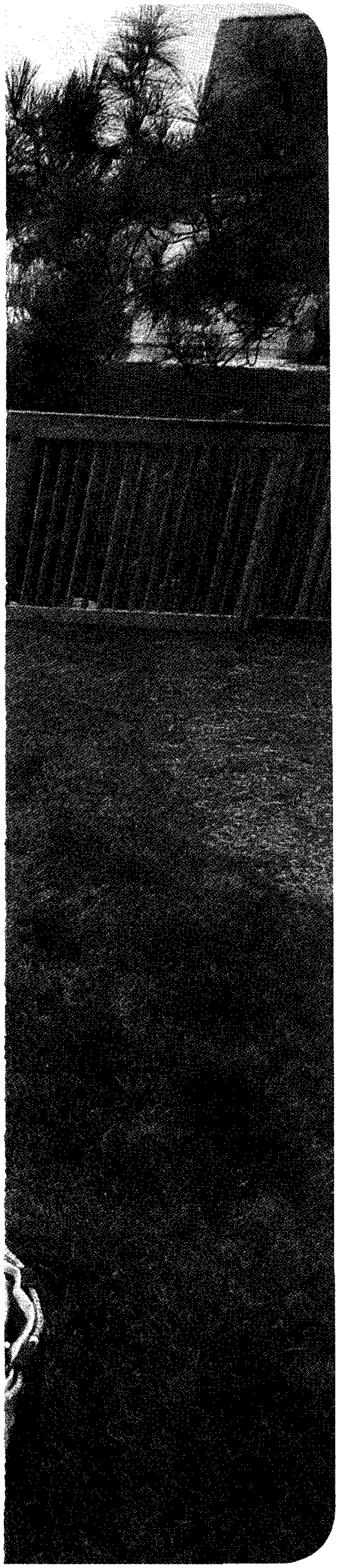

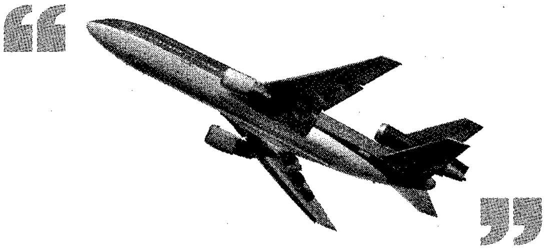

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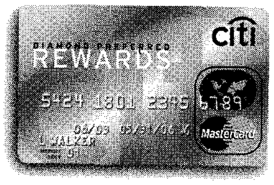
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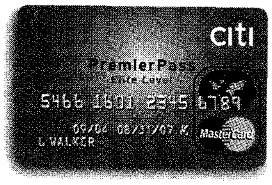
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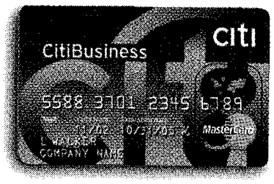
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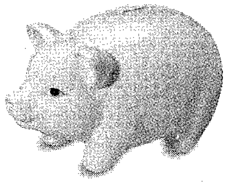

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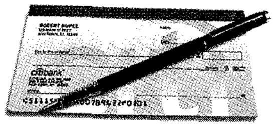

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CONTRIBUTORS

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Hendrik Hertzberg (Comment, p. 63) is a senior editor and a staff writer. His book "Politics: Observations & Arguments" comes out in paperback later this month.

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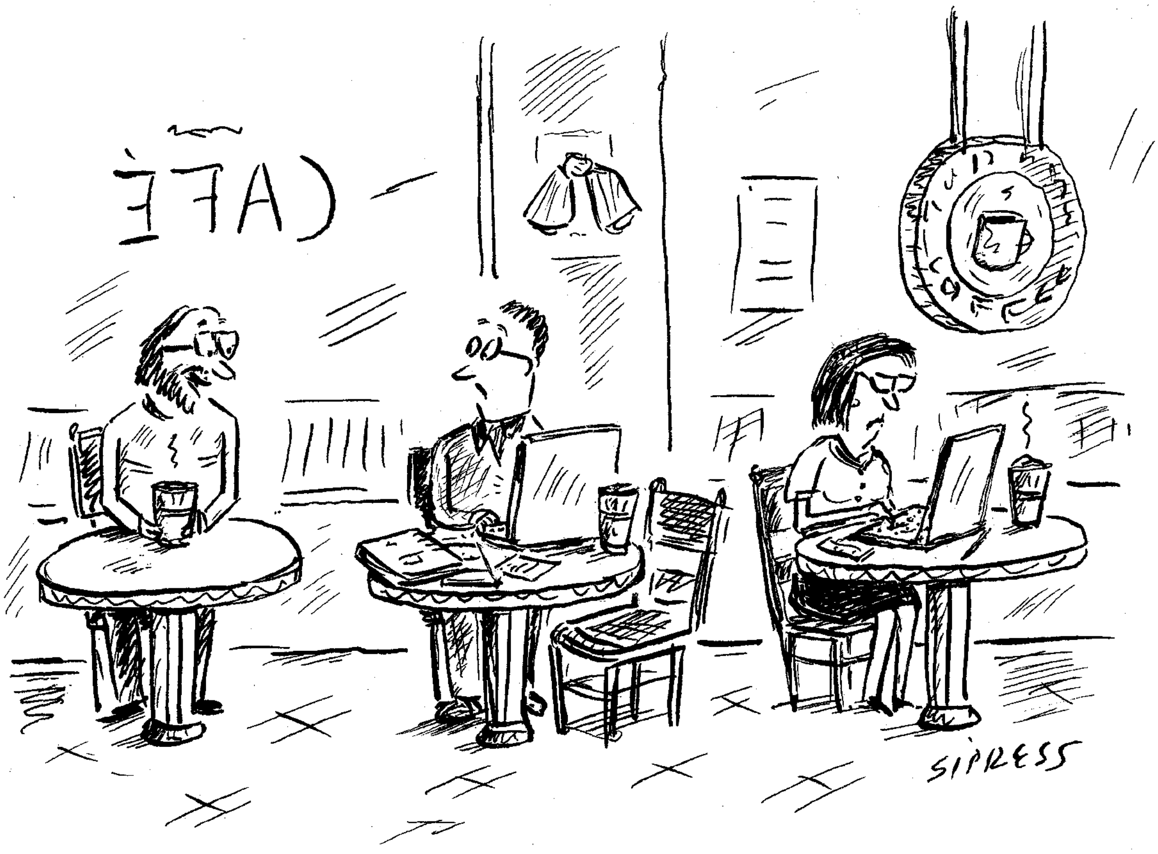
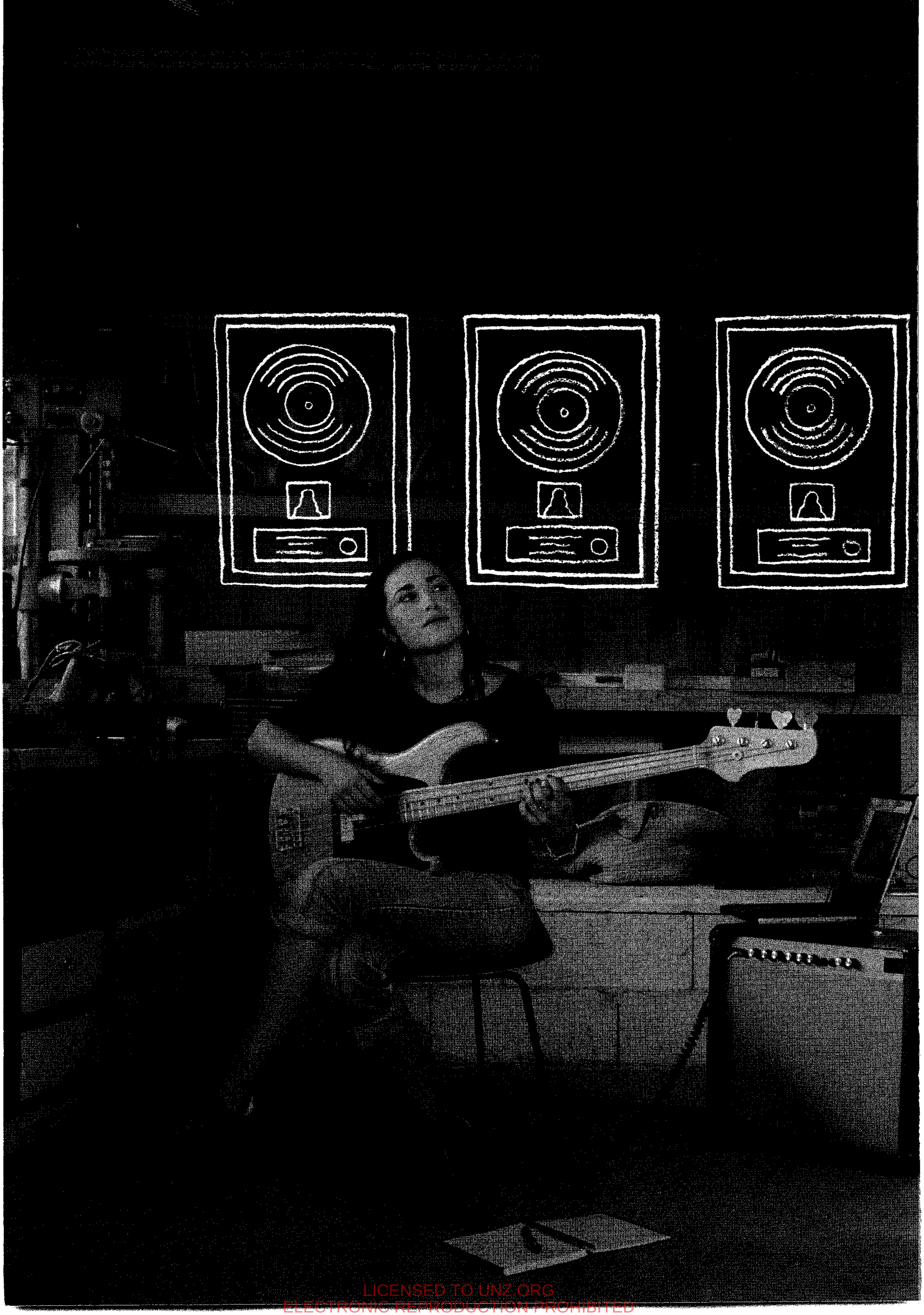
Sasha Frere-Jones (Pop Music, p. 178) is the magazine's pop-music critic. ♦



"I'm sorry to bother you, but I was wondering if I could borrow a little work?"



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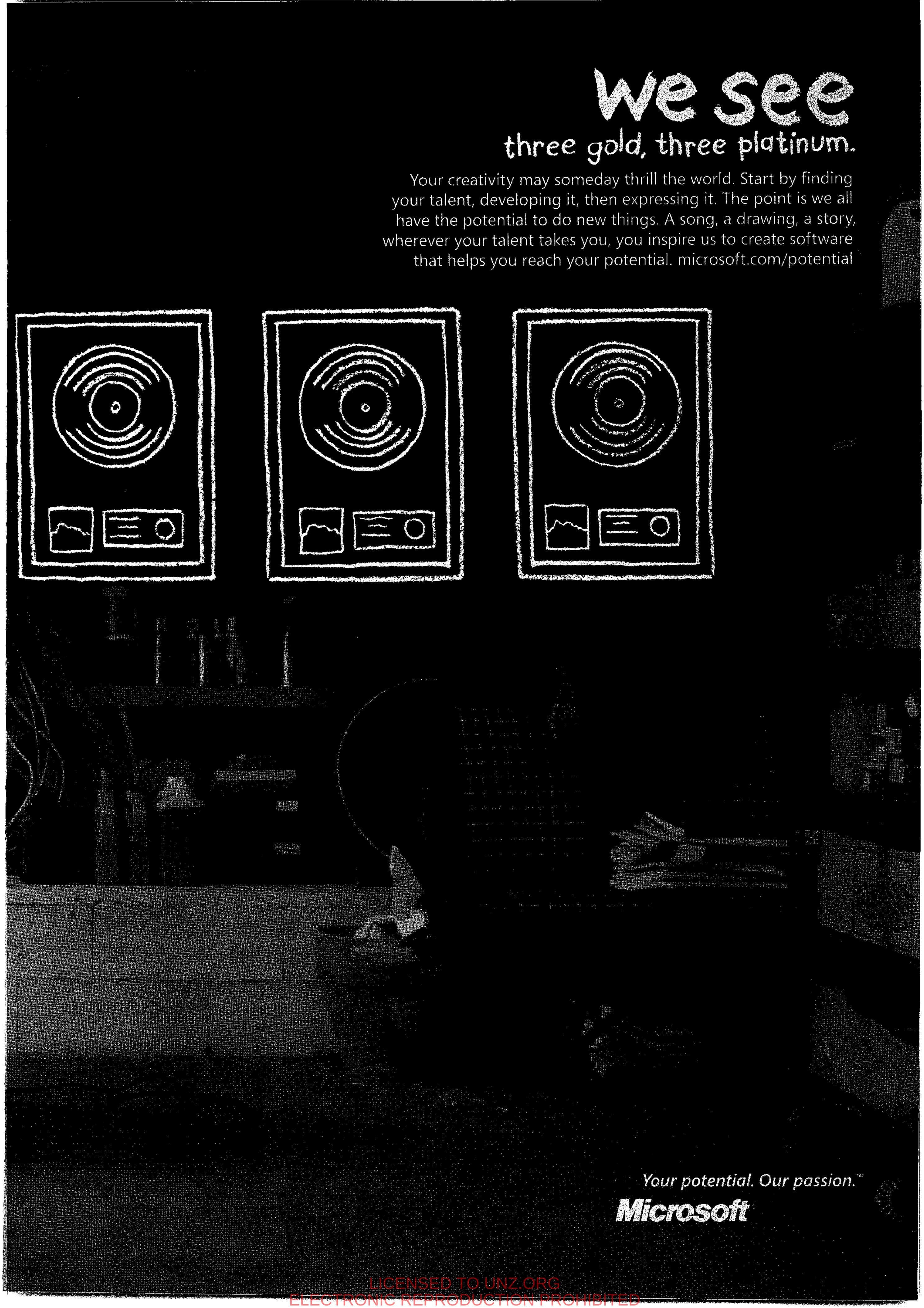

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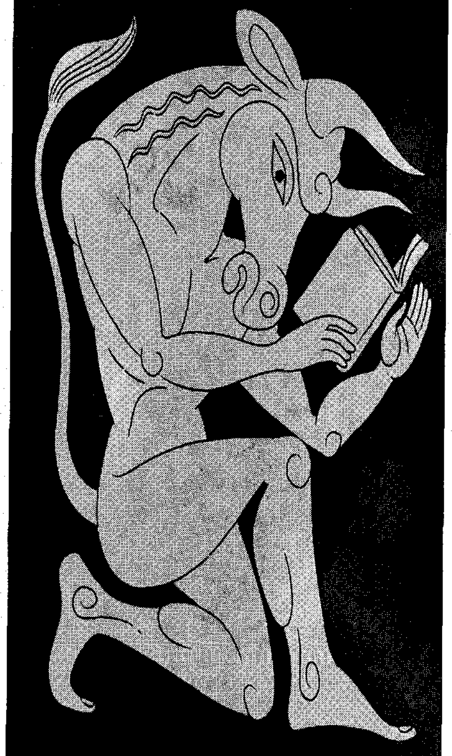

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GETTING WARMER

As a researcher investigating long-term anthropogenic changes in the carbon cycle, I was struck by the concluding sentences of Elizabeth Kolbert's recent series of articles on global warming, which summarized the current state of affairs as "a technologically advanced society" choosing, "in essence, to destroy itself" ("The Climate of Man," April 25th, May 2nd, and May 9th). Although the earth's climate is unquestionably changing as a result of human actions, and although the negative consequences of this will be serious, it is significant that many scenarios are less apocalyptic. Most models predict that changes in temperature and precipitation will be gradual in many parts of the world, probably allowing people in wealthier regions to adapt, albeit at substantial cost. In addition, the areas that will be hit hardest by temperature and precipitation changes include some of the poorest regions on earth. This means that there is a political aspect to who will suffer, and how much, which in turn goes a long way toward explaining the widespread indifference on the part of technologically advanced societies to the plight of the Alaskan seal-hunter community that Kolbert visits.

Erle C. Ellis
Department of Geography and
Environmental Systems
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
Baltimore, Md.

Kolbert's comprehensive survey makes clear the dimensions of the global-warming crisis, and sketches out some possible courses of action. Another possible solution is to devise a means of producing a global cooling that could reduce or counteract the warming. This is less far-fetched than it sounds, and various techniques have been proposed. One that collaborators and I have been developing, first described in *Nature* in 1990, involves modifying a small percentage of the shallow, low-level clouds that cover about a quarter of the earth's surface, by atomizing seawater to produce droplets that would rise into the clouds. This would increase the clouds' reflectivity of sunlight. Several independent computations suggest that the resultant cooling could be adequate to compensate for global warming. The technique would be controllable and ecologically benign, the only raw material required being seawater. More work is necessary to carry this technique further, and its meteorological ramifications need to be fully explored. But, even if we learn how to regulate the earth's temperature, we still need to eliminate other problems associated with increasing carbon-dioxide concentrations.

John Latham
National Center for Atmospheric Research
Boulder, Colo.

Kolbert is absolutely right to state that scientists and researchers who work on issues connected to global warming are far more concerned about the phenomenon than the lay community is. I have worked in the Antarctic Peninsula for twenty-two of the past twenty-three austral summers, assessing and monitoring penguin and seabird populations. I've witnessed unexpected and fundamental changes. Adélie-penguin populations have decreased by half, and blue-eyed-shag populations have also declined significantly. The Larsen Ice Shelf has collapsed, and it's now possible to circumnavigate James Ross Island. For those of us working on the front lines of global climate change, the apathy of politicians, and of the public at large, about this matter is hard to fathom. Ultimately, it seems that humans are incapable of thinking in time frames exceeding their own life spans. As a consequence, they are unwilling to adopt the enlightened life-style changes that may, potentially, make a difference, albeit many decades from now.

Ron Naveen
Washington, D.C.

•

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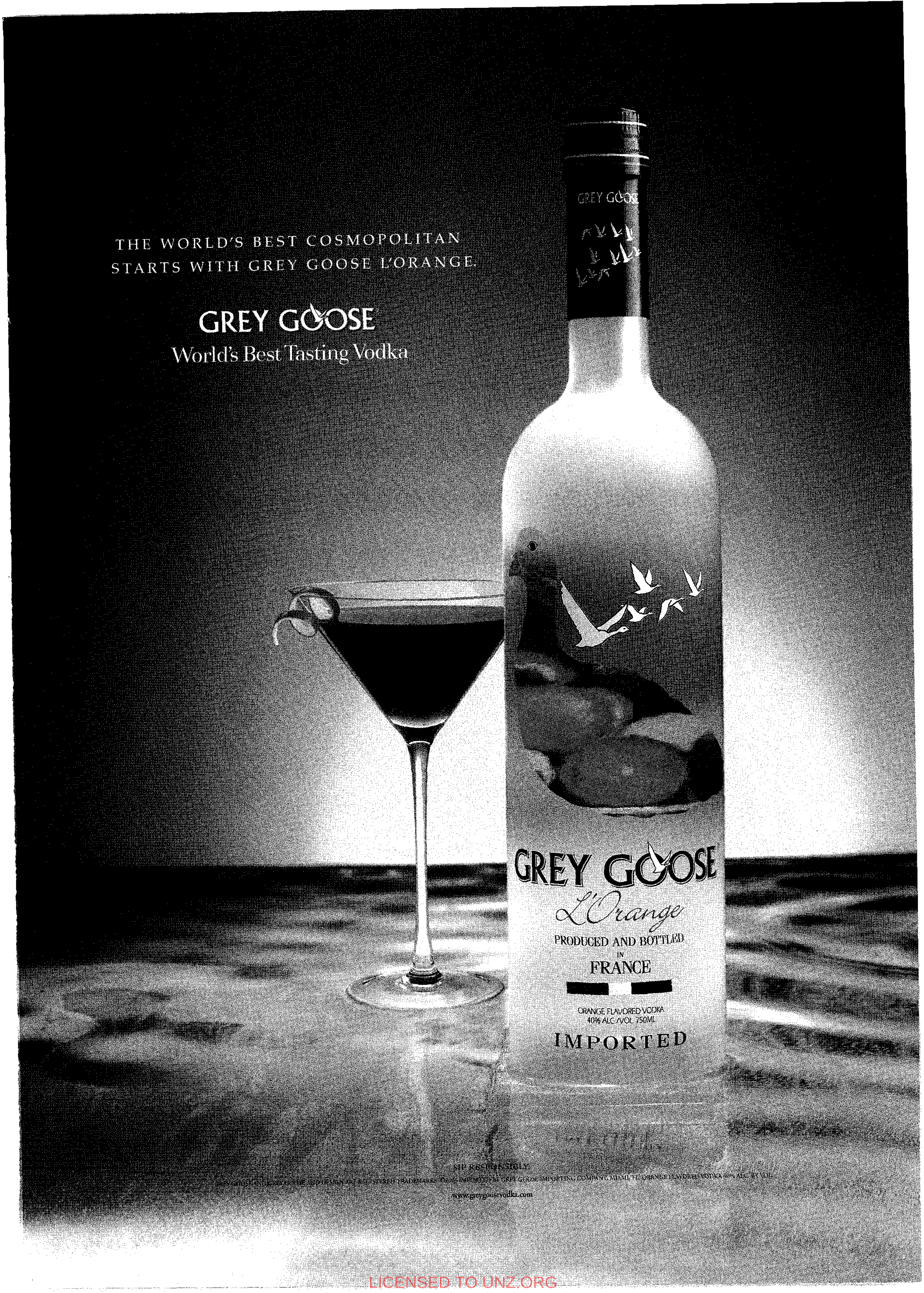
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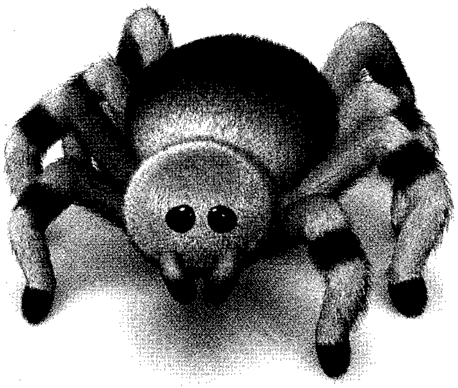

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Based on NAV	10.11%	6.55%	14.56%
Based on Market Price	9.96%	6.63%	14.47%

Total returns are calculated quarterly using the daily 4:00 p.m. net asset value (NAV). Distributions, if any, are assumed to be reinvested back into the fund on the pay date at the NAV on that date. Performance data quoted represents past performance and is no guarantee of future results. Current performance may be lower or higher than quoted. The investment return and principal value of an investment will fluctuate so that an investor's shares, when sold or redeemed, are subject to market volatility. They may be worth more or less than their original cost. MDY shares are bought and sold at market price (not NAV) and are not individually redeemed from the fund. Brokerage commissions will reduce returns. To obtain most recent month-end performance, please call 1-800-THE AMEX or visit www.MidCapSPDR.com.

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Kate Burton, one of the stars of "The Constant Wife." Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21				

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
SUMMER SHAKESPEARE

The outdoor Shakespeare season begins June 15 upstate at the lush Boscobel Restoration with "The Tempest," and others follow later this summer: there's the Public Theatre in Central Park, with "As You Like It" and John Guare's musical adaptation of "The Two Gentlemen of Verona"; the Hamptons Shakespeare Festival's "Midsummer Night's Dream"; and "The Taming of the Shrew," by Shakespeare & Company, in the Berkshires. (See page 26.)

NIGHT LIFE
HEAVY TRASH

Jon Spencer, of Blues Explosion, has collaborated with Matt Verta-Ray, of Speedball Baby, on this rockabilly-flavored side project, which yielded an album and a tour. The duo play the Pussycat Lounge, a downtown strip club with a second-floor performance space, on June 16. (See page 30.)

ART
INSIDE THE BIBLE BELT

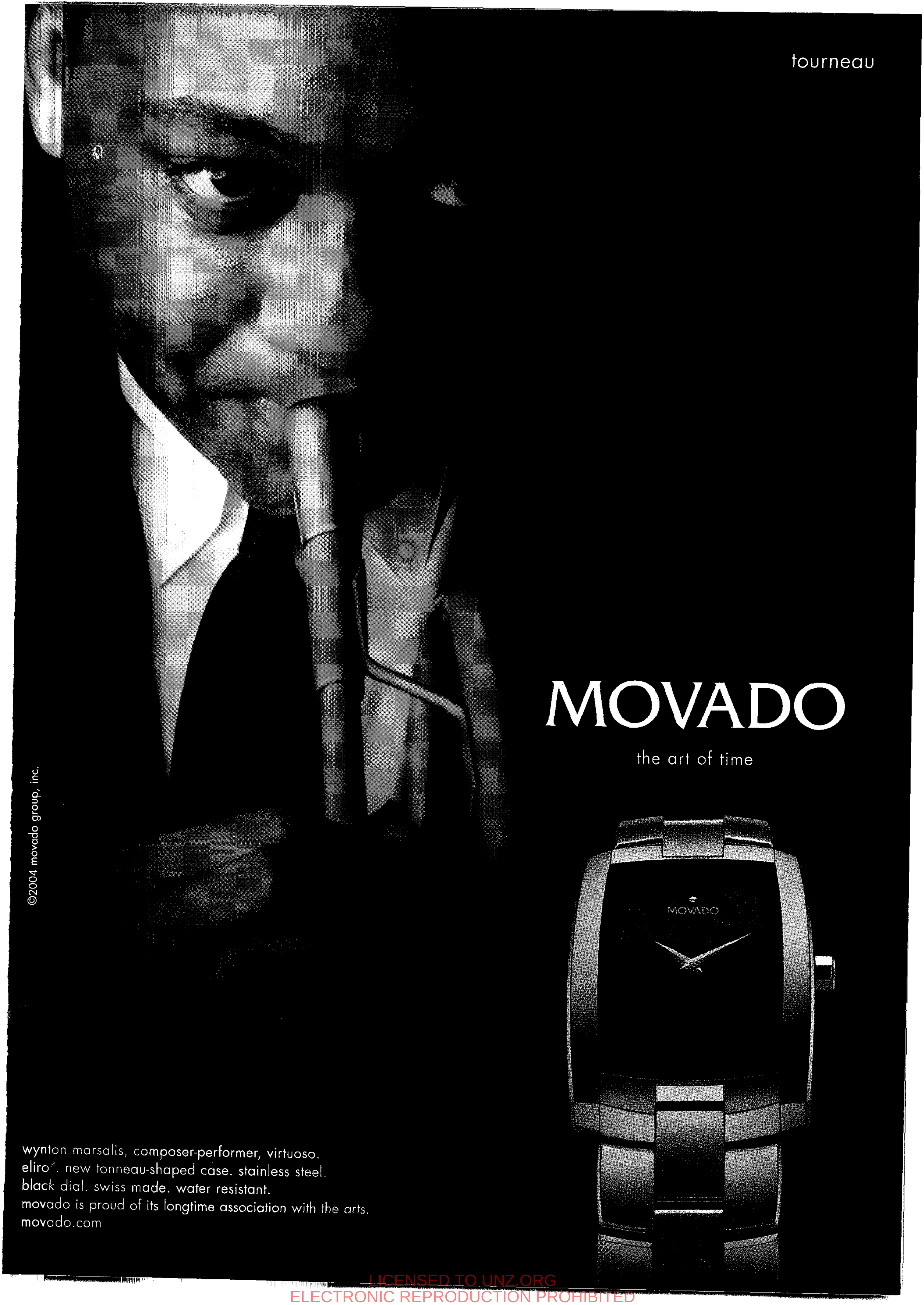
"Coming Home!: Self-Taught Artists, the Bible, and the American South" collects more than a hundred works of art on Biblical themes, including drawings, paintings, and sculptures. Well-known names like Howard Finster are represented, of course, but so are dozens of unheralded artists. (See page 32.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
TANGO SUMMIT

Music Mountain, the venerable string-quartet festival, departs from its traditionalist programming to offer two concerts by the Cuarteto Latinoamericano, an ensemble that will play music by the Argentinean tango master Astor Piazzolla. (See page 45.)

MOVIES
JAMES DEAN

It's easy to mount a James Dean retrospective—he made only three features before his death, in an auto accident in 1955. Film Forum will reprise his career, starting with "East of Eden" on June 10; "Rebel Without a Cause" and "Giant" will follow. Dean's early, uncredited roles—as a soldier in "Fixed Bayonets!" or as a teen at a soda fountain in "Has Anybody Seen My Gal?"—will not be represented. (See page 54.)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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

BIG TIMES
Leigh Silverman ("Well") directs a vaudevillian comedy written and performed by Mia Barron, Maggie Lacey, and Danielle Skraastad. A Women's Expressive Theatre production. Previews begin June 11. Opens June 18 at 8. (Walkerspace, 46 Walker St. 212-868-4444.)

BIRDIE BLUE
A new play about love, marriage, and time by Cheryl L. West stars S. Epatha Merkerson, Charles Weldon, and Billy Porter. Seret Scott directs. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

LAZER VAUDEVILLE
This antic, old-fashioned show—an evening of glow-in-the-dark juggling acts and rope tricks performed by three aces—transfers to the Lamb's Theatre on June 9. (130 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

MANUSCRIPT
Marin Ireland ("Sabina," "4:48 Psychosis"), Jeffrey Carlson, and Pablo Schreiber star in a comedy by Paul Grellong, about three people who hope that an enchanted manuscript will bring them fame. Directed by Bob Balaban. In previews. Opens June 12 at 7. (Daryl Roth, 101 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

MARK TWAIN TONIGHT!
Hal Holbrook has been channelling the curmudgeonly Missouri writer onstage since 1954; he won a Tony for his performance in 1966, when he brought the show to Broadway. The play (which is continually revised) now comes to the Brooks Atkinson for a three-week run. One preview on June 8. Opens June 9 at 6:30. (256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

BORDER/CLASH: A LITANY OF DESIRES
Def Poetry Jam's Staceyann Chin presents a one-woman autobiographical play about her life as a Jamaican-born New Yorker. Directed by Rob Urbinati. In previews. Opens June 16 at 7. (The Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

THE CHERRY ORCHARD
Chekhov's classic drama, in a new adaptation by Tom Donaghy, comes to the Atlantic Theatre. Scott Zigler directs. In previews. Opens June 15 at 7. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE CONSTANT WIFE
The Roundabout Theatre Company presents Somerset Maugham's comedy, set in London in the twenties, about a straying husband, a scheming wife, and their urbane circle of friends. Mark Brokaw directs a sparkling cast, led by Lynn Redgrave, Kate Burton, Kathryn Meisle, and Michael Cumpsty. In previews. Opens June 16 at 7. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

HECUBA
Vanessa Redgrave is the tragic queen in the Royal Shakespeare Company production of Euripides' play, in a new adaptation by the British poet Tony Harrison, which plays at BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House June 17-26. (30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100.)

THE PARIS LETTER
A Wall Street macher is dogged by secrets from his past, in the New York première of a play by Jon Robin Baitz, presented by the Roundabout Theatre Company. John Glover, Michele Pawk, and Ron Rifkin lead the cast. Directed by Doug Hughes. In previews. Opens June 12 at 2. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

PEOPLE ARE LIVING THERE
Athol Fugard's play from 1969—about a landlady who celebrates her fiftieth birthday with her motley crew of lodgers—has been adapted by the Specific Theatre Company (with the playwright's permission) and reset in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Directed by Suzanne Shepherd. Previews begin June 8. Opens June 16 at 8. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

OUT OF TOWN

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
Through the poles of the tented outdoor stage at the Boscobel Restoration, theatregoers can see the lush trees of the Palisades and the glint of the Hudson. Previews for "The Tempest," the first show of the season, begin June 15. Opens June 18 at 8. Directed by Terrence O'Brien. (Cold Spring, N.Y. For more information, visit hvshakespeare.org. 845-265-9575.)

RAGTIME
Stafford Arima's London staging of the musical by Terrence McNally (book), Stephen Flaherty (music), and Lynn Ahrens (lyrics), based on the novel by E. L. Doctorow, comes to the Paper Mill Playhouse. Previews begin June 8. Opens June 12 at 7:30. (Millburn, N.J. 973-376-4343.)

NOW PLAYING

AFTER THE NIGHT AND THE MUSIC
A new work by Elaine May, about life in this millennium, stars Jeanne Berlin and J. Smith-Cameron. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE ARGUMENT
At the outset of Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros's sharp, powerful play, a man and a woman push through the front door of an apartment, locked in a wild embrace. Sophie (Melissa Leo), a diminutive forty-two-year-old painter, hangs on the hulking frame of a forty-nine-year-old stockbroker named Phillip (Jay O. Sanders) like a buoy on a yacht. From this light and lively fling between strangers, the playwright proceeds to the safe harbor of love and cohabitation. But a pregnancy forces the couple to confront their own tyrannical desires: Philip, a childless divorcé, sees this as his last chance to be a father; Sophie prefers the miracle of artistic creation to the miracle of procreation. A torrent of abuse rains down from both sides—"weakling," "selfish," "liar," "cripple." By the end of the play, Sophie is bound hand and foot, in an act of sadism supposedly motivated by good will. An adroitly executed show, well directed by Maria Mileaf. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/6/05.) (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

BFE
Julia Cho's new play, about a dysfunctional Asian-American family, is the season closer for Playwrights Horizons. Directed by Gordon Edelstein. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Peter Jay Sharp, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

BRITS OFF BROADWAY
Four shows appear at the festival over the next two weeks. Two join the lineup on June 7: "Jackson's Way," Will Adamsdale's comic one-man show about an American motivational speaker, and "Faster," by Filter Theatre, about the modern obsession with speed. A play by the marvellous Alan Ayckbourn, "Private Fears in Public Places," begins performances on June 9. "Unsuspecting Susan," by Stewart Permutt, starring Celia Imrie ("Calendar Girls"), goes up June 14. (59E59 Theatre, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

FLIGHT
This well-crafted play by Garth Wingfield explores the troubling personal and professional history of the aviator and inventor Charles Lindbergh. Among the many points that Wingfield illuminates in his sparse, cinematic script is the way in which the mythic moments of Lindbergh's life—the transatlantic crossing, the notorious kidnapping of his child—more or less stifled any chance he might have had to become a person, rather than a public figure. Gregg Edelman gives a spookily accurate portrayal of Lindbergh, and Kerry O'Malley plays his wife, the writer Anne Morrow, with sparkling lyricism. Directed by Nick Corley. (5/30/05) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

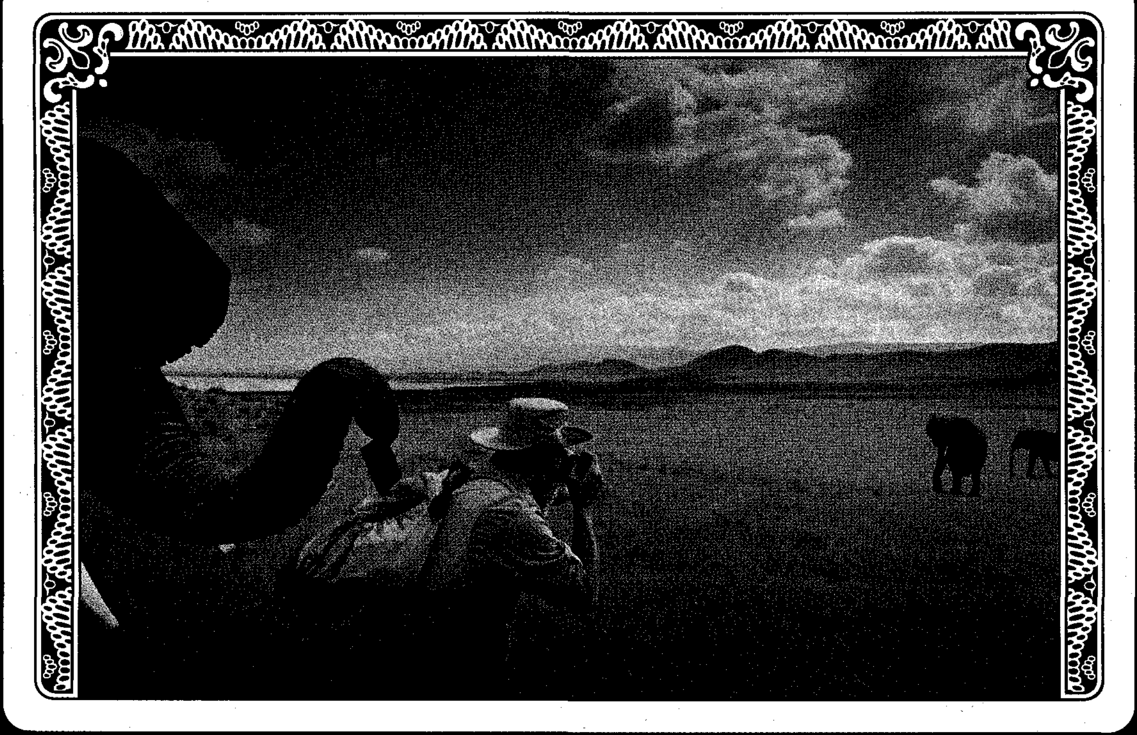
GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS
Joe Mantello directs a pitch-perfect revival of David Mamet's majestic play about a group of Chicago real-estate brokers who fight to get the leads, get ahead of each other, close the sale, and get on the board. It's a sort of three-card monte of verbal manipulation, in which words are decoys of self-interest that connect the speakers to nothing but their own craven desire. From the first beat of this production, the play swings; the virtuoso cast—Alan Alda, Liev Schreiber, Gordon Clapp, Jeffrey Tambor, Frederick Weller, Tom Wopat, Jordan Lage—sends it solid. (5/9/05) (Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

POP NOTES
WARM MILK

"Comfort music" sounds like an insult, no matter how you spin it. But it's an insult that the enormously popular English quartet Coldplay is probably willing to endure, given that it has sold twenty million records filled with music that is sometimes sweet, sometimes warm, and sometimes fuzzy. And although this isn't the kind of thing that earns critical adoration, it's also true that Coldplay is expert at the form. Only a churl could resist their best singles: "Yellow," a piercingly sincere bit of high-school poetry that is just as moving as they intended it to be, and the airy, hypnotic "Clocks." Chris Martin, the affable lead vocalist, provides strong vocals that are feminine without being annoyingly sensitive, and the band's musical landscape is soothing but not soporific, subtly packed with hooks and catchy bits.

Up until now, this has been healthy. But on Coldplay's third album, "X&Y" (Capitol), the band has apparently caught the virus *Significatio terribilis*, a condition that previously afflicted bands such as U2. While Bono and his friends have always had an unusual capacity for world-encompassing bombast, Coldplay's more modest charm doesn't benefit from being supersized. Martin's lyrics, once introspective mash notes, now sound like a thousand coffee-mug mottoes strung together, inspirational at first blush but completely devoid of substance. The band is like a character actor desperate for a romantic lead and pulling out all the stops. And the stops are all here: the strings, the orchestral swoops, the cavernous soundscapes. Much of the problem stems from pacing: almost every song can be classified as a ballad or, when the band is feeling especially frisky, a mid-tempo track. This is not to say that the album is entirely unappealing; a few songs, including "Speed of Sound" and "Talk" (the latter has the album's best hook, although it's lifted from Kraftwerk's "Computer Love"), are successes of a sort. But what sort? Sadly, the generic sort. In the end, it's hard to say what any of "X&Y" is about, except the fact that Martin can write a dozen songs' worth of vaguely reassuring lyrics ("When you try your best but you don't succeed / When you get what you want but not what you need"). There are moments of real beauty, like Jonny Buckland's closing guitar line in "Low," and for a moment the goosebumps start to rise. But they go down soon enough.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*



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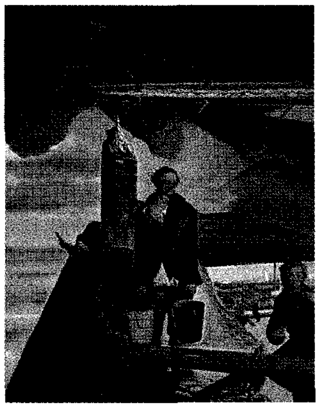
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
REALISM AND RAUCH

Has anyone ever loved a picture by Neo Rauch at first sight? Rauch, who was born in Leipzig in 1960, may be the most impressive artist of his generation, worldwide—a new-fangled history painter who makes stunning use of his training in socialist realism. In this show at Zwirner, ten grandly scaled canvases present taciturn, massive figures—workers, students, paramilitarists, and the odd hirsute barbarian or woman wielding a hookah—amid broken architecture and unhappy nature, fraught with hints of recent or impending violence. Rauch's harsh, burly manner is all visual hips and elbows. His colors tend toward those of the German flag and acrid secondaries. You can't hold his surreal scenes in memory, let alone start to interpret them. But look closely. Everything is wonderfully painted, in fluent styles that vary according to what they represent: fire, foliage, flesh, snow. The works are less constructed than spoken or sung into being. They chant a Middle European history, a drama of toxic pasts and obsolete futures.

—*Peter Schjeldahl*



NEO RAUCH, HÖHE, 2004

MISS JULIE
Set in the kitchen of Miss Julie's father, a landowning count, Strindberg's drama centers on class and sexual differences as they are played out between Miss Julie (Marin Hinkle) and her father's butler and valet, Jean. What draws them to each other is precisely their class difference. Their union is inevitable because it is forbidden. The talented Reg Rogers (who resembles a meatier Adrien Brody) plays Jean; he is a star, and he wants you to know it. There are layers to Hinkle's Miss Julie, but unfortunately too many of them are soft; the director, Anders Cato, has failed to draw from her the complicated sense of evil and manipulation that is necessary for the part. (5/30/05) (Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444. Through June 19.)

SONGS FROM AN UNMADE BED
The lyricist Mark Campbell ("Volpone") has enlisted a talented batch of composers—including Joseph Thalken, Jeffrey Stock, and Jenny Giering—to score his alternately warm and jaded solo song cycle about middle-aged gay romance. Both Campbell's words and Michael Winther's performance fare best when they are tinged with bitterness, as in one episode that warns wryly against sex with actors; elsewhere, the dating humor sometimes sags. David Schweizer's deft staging and Neil Patel's dreamscape set make the piece a surprising pleasure for the eyes. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. Through June 26.)

THE TALK OF THE TOWN
The Peccadillo Theatre Company's brisk and clever play about the wits who gathered at the Algonquin Round Table in the twenties, featuring well-crafted period-style songs by Ginny Redington and Tom Dawes, plays every Monday night this summer in the hotel's Oak Room. (59 W. 44th St. 212-840-6800.)

TERRORISM
This smart, saturnine meditation on terror, written by the Siberian brothers Oleg and Vladimir Presnyakov in 2000, has come to New York via the Moscow Arts Theatre and London's Royal Court. In it, they capture the chilly, demoralized internal climate that fear creates in the mind and show how, in a world tipped upside down by terror, suspicion erodes the bonds between people and undermines the community. The characters here, who are never named, are unhappy, confused, deracinated, and cruel. The play is structured as a sort of existential murder mystery. In the course of six linked scenes, as the sadism of individuals and the group is slowly revealed, concrete slabs, which at first suggest barriers erected to keep terror out, become a metaphor for the impermeable walls of hatred and isolation that keep the terrorized self in. Crisply directed by Will Frears. (6/6/05) (Theatre Row, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THRILL ME: THE LEOPOLD & LOEB STORY
Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, the "thrill killers" of 1924, narrowly escaped the death sentence, but they get their just rewards at the York Theatre Company, where their salacious story has been ground into musical mush. The spine-chilling psychology behind this tale—the preppy sociopath Loeb (Doug Kreeger) wanted to kill a fourteen-year-old boy for kicks and persuaded Leopold (Matt Bauer) to abet him in return for sexual favors—wilts beneath Stephen Dolginoff's plodding music and expository lyrics. Director Michael Rupert uses thick stage smoke to create his grisly mise-en-scène, but, sadly, too much remains visible. (Saint Peter's Church at Citigroup, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-868-4444.)

Also Playing

ALL SHOOK UP: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100. **ALTAR BOYZ:** Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BEAST ON THE MOON:** Century Center for the Performing Arts, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG:** Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100. **DESSA ROSE:** Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DOUBT:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **FIDDLER ON THE ROOF:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100. **THE GLASS MENAGERIE:** Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **HURLYBURLY:** 37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100. **JULIUS CAESAR:** Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544. **MEMORY HOUSE:** Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **ON GOLDEN POND:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **ORSON'S SHADOW:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **THE PILLOWMAN:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **SCORE:** New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. (Through June 9.) **SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER:** Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. (Through June 16.) **STEEL MAGNOLIAS:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300. **SWEET CHARITY:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING):** DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **TWELVE ANGRY MEN:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. (Closes June 11.) **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200. **WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100. **WOMAN BEFORE A GLASS:** Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes June 12.)

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

APOLLO THEATRE
253 W. 125th St. (212-531-5300)—June 9: After years on the underground scene creating socially conscious hip-hop, the L.A.-based group **Black Eyed Peas** became a household name last year when its album "Elephunk" won a Grammy and topped the charts (thanks in part to Justin Timberlake's contribution). The group's follow-up album, "Monkey Business," released this week, features high-energy beats and radio-ready lyrics.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—June 10: The raucous sounds of New Orleans's **ReBirth Brass Band.** June 16: The "Cosmic Cowboy" **Jerry Jeff Walker.** June 19: If heavy metal is a religion (and it is to some), **Manowar** represents its fundamentalist orthodoxy. These New Yorkers brandish broadswords, wear loincloths, and play at skull-denting volumes. With the battle cry of "Death to false metal!" the band is touring to promote the rerelease of three albums from its glory days.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—June 11: The versatile Canadian outfit the **Dears,** which may never shake off comparisons to British acts such as Blur and the Smiths, trades in lush cinematic rock marked by inventive shifts in style and tempo. With the **Shout Out Louds,** an energetic quartet from Stockholm that feels no shame in wearing its heart on its sleeve. June 12: Making a rare Stateside appearance, three members of the British progressive-rock underdogs **Marillion** perform an acoustic set. June 15: **Caesars.** You know this Swedish band, even if you don't think you do. Its song "Jerk It Out" provided the soundtrack for animated dancers on the iPod Shuffle television commercial. The band just released "Paper Tigers," an ambitious new album of guitar and organ pop destined to keep it from being a one-hit wonder.

BOWERY POETRY CLUB
308 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (212-614-0505)—Thursdays through July 2: The visual artist-cum-musician **Andy Friedman** and his band the Other Failures. June 17: **Fast 'n Bulbous.** The guitarist and onetime Captain Beefheart co-conspirator **Gary Lucas** and **Phillip Johnston,** the avant-garde jazzman and arranger, reinterpret the compositions of Don Van Vliet with their Captain Beefheart Project.

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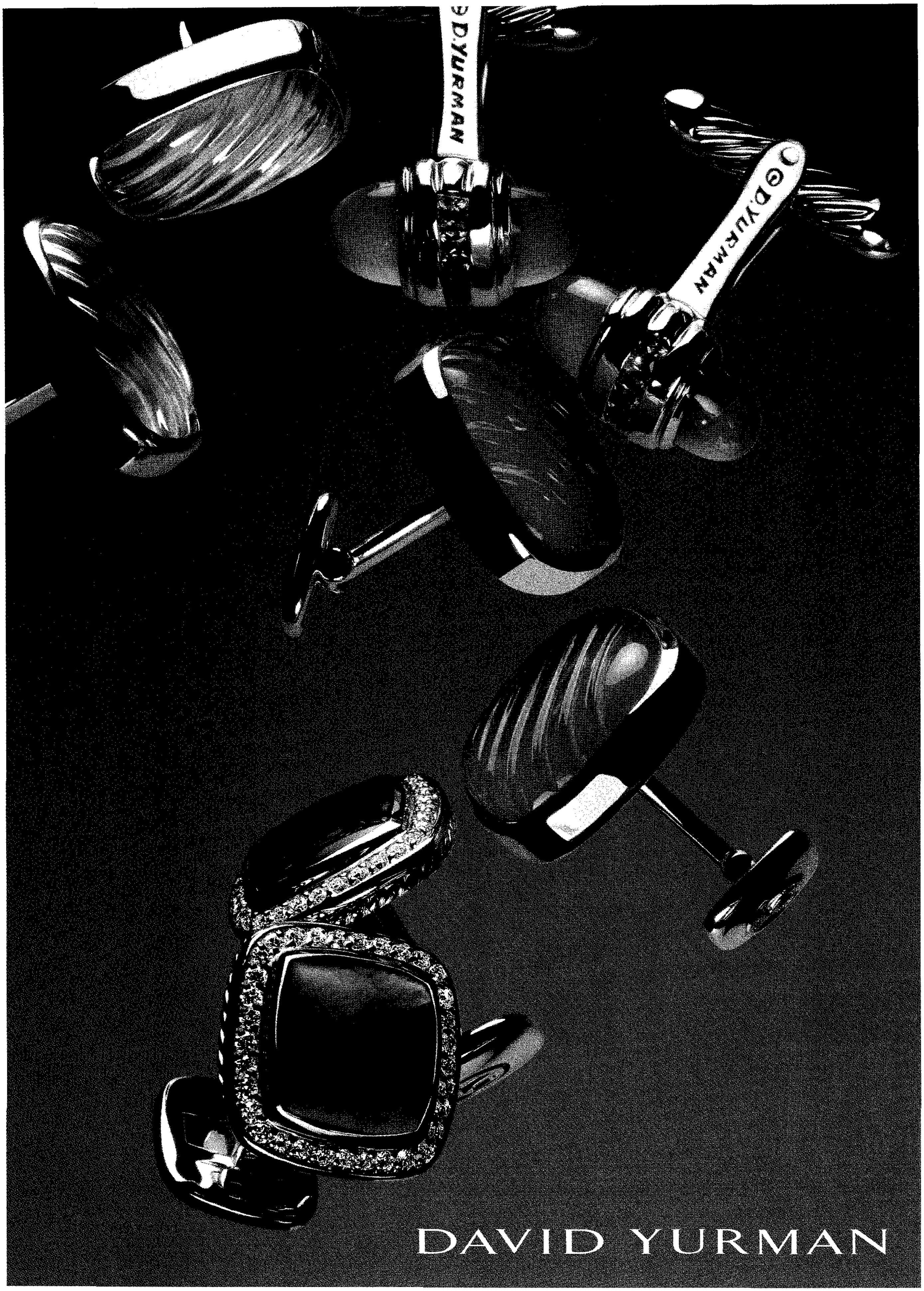
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CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE
Amsterdam Ave. at 110th St. (212-316-7469)—The **Dancing Crane Georgian Music Ensemble** is based in Warwick, New York, but nearly all its members are natives of Georgia. They present a program of traditional music from their homeland, but no dancing, on June 12.

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
Prospect Park Band Shell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. (718-855-7882, ext. 45)—June 15: The iconoclastic, often brilliant singer and songwriter **Rickie Lee Jones.** June 17: The JVC Jazz Festival (see below) presents the **Bad Plus,** the **Charlie Hunter** trio, and the **James Carter Organ Trio.**

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. (212-360-2777)—June 17: **Will Calhoun,** the powerhouse drummer behind Living Colour, steps outside the rock realm with AZA, which features the saxophonist **Pharoah Sanders,** the trumpeter **Wallace Roney,** the pianist **Orrin Evans,** and the bassist **John Benitez.** With **Burnt Sugar,** the expansive improvisational outfit conducted by the music journalist **Greg Tate.** June 18: The soulful vocalist **John Legend.** June 20: **Modest Mouse,** the Seattle-based indie-rock band whose album "Good News for People Who Love Bad News" became a surprise hit last summer, plays a benefit show.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—June 9: Fronted by the stellar vocalist and accordionist Annette Ezekiel, the contemporary klezmer band **Golem** uncovers lost or forgotten tunes and modernizes Yiddish classics, but what sets it apart is its ability to balance a wild, edgy approach with a reverence for Old World tradition. June 10: **A.R.E. Weapons,** a local trio that specializes in crude, simple electronic rock. The sound is reminiscent of Suicide, and, fittingly, the Weapons cop a confrontational attitude. With **Larry Tee,** the father of the electroclash movement.

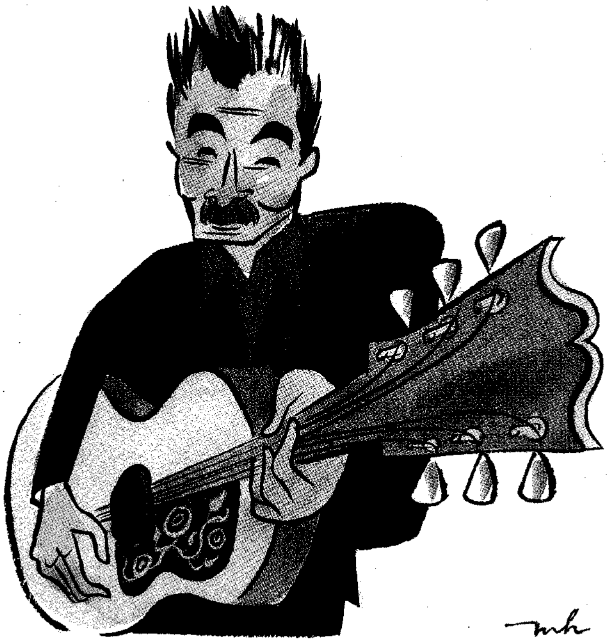
MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—June 10: The **Go-Betweens** are a storied Australian band that made rich, sophisticated pop in the eighties but remain obscure outside of rock-critic social circles (a decade-plus hiatus didn't help). The band returned in 2000 and is currently promoting a new album, "Oceans Apart," that lives up to its early promise. June 16-17: The **National,** a quintet of Ohio transplants who live in Brooklyn, set up shop for two nights on the heels of releasing their latest album, "Alligator." The band's foundation is a pair of twin siblings who keep the overtly romantic, au-courant indie rock tight, but it's the mesmerizing baritone of the lead singer, Matt Berringer, that gets its songs stuck in your head.

"MIDSUMMER NIGHT SWING"
Fountain Plaza, Lincoln Center (212-721-6500)—Alfresco dancing gets under way on June 16 with the classic swing of the **Nelson Riddle Orchestra,** followed by the rumba, *son,* and Afro-Cuban sounds of **Chico Álvarez** and his **Palomonte Cuban Big Band** (June 17), the salsa of **Johnny Pacheco** (June 18), and more swing and ballroom music with the **Stardusters Big Band** (June 21). The music and lessons continue through July 16.

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—June 17-19: **Jonathan Richman,** one of the architects of the sound that became punk rock, has always dwelled just under the radar. His first band, the Modern Lovers, set a blunt sonic template in the early seventies that was later mimicked by the Ramones and the Sex Pistols, but the eccentric Richman soon renounced an aggressive approach in favor of a melodic, whimsical style. He's stuck with it ever since.

PUSSYCAT LOUNGE
96 Greenwich St., at Rector St. (212-349-4800)—The new band **Heavy Trash** is Jon Spencer, of Blues Explosion, and Matt Verta-Ray, of Speedball Baby, on a rockabilly joyride. The project began with the two hanging out at Verta-Ray's Lower East Side studio drinking beer and toying with reverb. Their raw self-titled album has the sound of an instant classic. The two play this venue, a strip club with a second-floor performance space, on June 16.

ROSELAND
239 W. 52nd St. (212-307-7171)—June 10: **Aimee Mann,** a longtime chronicler of personal upheaval, stops by with songs from "The Forgotten Arm," her new concept album about the tumultuous relationship between a lonely boxer and a young girl he meets at a state fair. The bleak, wry tunes cover familiar ground—isolation, heartbreak, addiction, and loss. June 16: The Georgia folk outfit **Indigo Girls.**


The veteran singer-songwriter John Prine, at Town Hall.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—June 13: **Seu Jorge,** the super-cool Brazilian singer and actor who starred in "City of God" and who provided comic relief to Wes Anderson's "The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou" with his acoustic Portuguese-language renditions of David Bowie songs, makes a rare U.S. appearance.

TOWN HALL
123 W. 43rd St. (212-840-2824)—June 10: The Zimbabwean singer and guitarist **Oliver Mtukudzi** has been layering upbeat rhythms with politically charged messages for more than three decades. His latest album, "Nhava," which also features his longtime band, the Black Spirits, is full of breezy, catchy tunes that address universal concerns from the perspective of his homeland. June 15: **John Prine.** The veteran singer-songwriter's voice has the charm of a comfortable old cigarette-singed sofa, and his wry observations and his white-glove songwriting make him a national treasure. He recently released "Fair & Square," his first album of new material in nearly a decade. With the legendary songwriter **Chip Taylor** ("Wild Thing," "Angel of the Morning," and others) and his fiddling and singing partner, **Carrie Rodriguez.**

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—June 8-9: The beloved Austin, Texas, indie-rock band **Spoon** is back with a new album, "Gimme Fiction."

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through June 11: The old-school pop stylist **Jack Jones** hasn't appeared on the cabaret scene for some time. His graceful and assured way with a standard is fast becoming a lost art.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—June 14-19: On his new album, "Flow," the trumpeter **Terence Blanchard** called upon the guest producer Herbie Hancock to bring some funk to the recording. Here, with the keyboardist **Aaron Parks** and the guitarist **Lionel Loueke** onboard, Blanchard's sextet will mate neo-bop with new grooves.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—The articulate and responsive pianist **Fred Hersch,** who recently assisted Renée Fleming on her album "Haunted Heart," has made duos a specialty. His diverse guests here are the reeds player **Chris Potter** (June 7), the saxophonist **Ted Nash** (June 8), the trombonist **Bob Brookmyer** (June 9), the vibraphonist **Stefon Harris** (June 10), the singer **Kate McGarry** (June 11), and the saxophonist **Mark Turner** (June 12). The following week, the JVC Jazz Festival (see below) presents **David Murray.** Still taking the tenor saxophone as far as it can go, Murray (here June 17-19) continues his collaboration with the **Gwo-Ka Masters** of Guadeloupe.

JVC JAZZ FESTIVAL
This year's gathering is all over the place stylistically, much like the contemporary jazz scene itself, although free-jazz and more avant performers remain mostly off limits. Highlights include "100 Years and a Day: Doc Cheatham Centennial Jazz Party," in which a host of heavyweights pay tribute to the intrepid trumpeter (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St., June 14); the pianist **Chick Corea,** who will revisit the music of his flamenco-based "Touchstone" album, from 1982 (Rose Theatre, June 16); the highly anticipated double bill of the daring septuagenarian saxophonist **Wayne Shorter** and his quartet and the dazzling bassist **Dave Holland** and his quintet (Carnegie Hall, June 17); a ninetieth-birthday celebration for **Les Paul,** the man who perfected the electric guitar, featuring **Peter Frampton, Richie Sambora, Kenny Wayne Shepherd, José Feliciano,** and **Madeleine Peyroux** (Carnegie Hall, June 19); and a long-overdue tribute to the pianist and singer **Barbara Carroll** (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St., June 21). (See also Celebrate Brooklyn! and Jazz Standard. For more information, visit www.festivalproductions.net. Through June 25.)

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (212-864-6662)—**Lea DeLaria,** Broadway's favorite comic foil, also does quite a turn as a feisty jazz-inflected singer. On June 16 she performs selections from her new album, "Double Standards."

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—June 7-12: The pianist **Mulgrew Miller** has lately been flaunting his adaptability in the dissimilar bands of Ron Carter and Joe Lovano, but Miller's own trio best exhibits the venerated veteran's florid soulfulness. June 14-19: The drummer **Ben Riley** and his **Monk Legacy Septet** is a Thelonious Monk tribute band without a pianist. Trust the trumpeter, arranger, and general conceptualist **Don Sickler** to score Monk's masterpieces for four horns and a guitarist. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

VISION FESTIVAL X
As world priorities go, free jazz ranks right up there with peaceful coexistence these days, but this festival remains committed to both. It was founded ten years ago by the choreographer Patricia Nicholson Parker; she and her industrious bassist husband, William Parker, are joined by a slew of visionaries, including Fred Anderson, Sam Rivers, Wayne Horvitz, Leroy Jenkins, Peter Brötzmann, and Bill Dixon. (The Angel Orensanz Foundation Center for the Arts, 172 Norfolk St. For more information, visit www.visionfestival.org. June 14-19.)

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

PETROUCHKA REDUX

"Petrouchka," which was a steady hit with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, has not aged well. With its marvellous Stravinsky score and its gemütlich setting—fair time in old St. Petersburg, with the drunks and Punch-and-Judy shows—it should have gone on firing, but it hasn't. The problem, almost always, is with the title character, who embodies certain conventions—the "holy fool," the belief that the meek will inherit the earth—that aren't that popular anymore. Vaslav Nijinsky, for whom the role was created, reportedly played it deadpan. Whatever his griefs, he never stopped being a puppet, a wooden toy. Later interpreters have made the character too pitiable. You almost want him to get stabbed by the Moor. This year, American Ballet Theatre is trying one more time, in a new staging—based, actually, on the old Joffrey Ballet staging—by Gary Chryst, who was one of the few great Petrouchkas of recent times. The show opens on June 16. Four different men will alternate in the lead (the smart money is on Herman Cornejo and Angel Corella), and Chryst says that he tells them not to feel sorry for themselves. This bodes well.

—*Joan Acocella*

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—Two recent installations are on view in **"Tony Oursler at the Met: 'Studio' and 'Climaxed.'"** The first contemplates the influences at work on the artist through an assemblage of pieces by the likes of Jacqueline Humphries, Rem Koolhaas, and Kaare Rafoss. The second, more traditional Oursler work is a giant, lumpy potato head with flames and a blinky face projected on it, its mouth voicing demented and hilarious threats, boasts, and sorrows. Through Sept. 18. ♦ **"All the Mighty World: The Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852-1860."** Through Aug. 21. ♦ **"Chanel,"** a retrospective of designs from the couture house. Through Aug. 7. ♦ **"John Townsend: Newport Cabinetmaker"** presents a few dozen pieces by a prominent Colonial American furniture-maker alongside additional work by his contemporaries. Through Sept. 25. ♦ **"Sol LeWitt on the Roof: Splotches, Whirls, and Twirls."** A summer installation in the roof garden of five spiky stalagmite sculptures and a wall drawing. Through Oct. 30. ♦ **"Max Ernst: A Retrospective."** Some hundred and eighty paintings, drawings, sculptures, collages, and illustrated books by the restlessly creative artist (1891-1976). Through July 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Friedlander,"** a major retrospective of the work of the photographer Lee Friedlander (born 1934). Through Aug. 29. ♦ **"The High Line"** details Field Operations and Diller Scofidio & Renfro's ambitious urban rails-to-trails scheme for the abandoned elevated tracks that run along the West Side from Gansevoort to Thirty-fourth Street. Through Oct. 31. ♦ Chris Marker's **"Owls at Noon Prelude: The Hollow Men."** Through June 13. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—An adviser to Solomon R. Guggenheim and the curator of his institution's early iteration, as the Museum of Non-Objective Painting, Hilla Rebay (1890-1967) was also a prolific and adventurous artist, convinced that abstraction could teach "rhythmic action, spiritual uplift, and exquisite joy." Synesthetic enlightenment may not arise on the spot in **"Art of Tomorrow: Hilla Rebay and Solomon R. Guggenheim,"** but the feisty German expatriate is revealed in this ample selection of paintings, watercolors, pastels, and collages to be a brilliant and independent colleague of the artists she championed. Her work fills two galleries, and a third samples the Kandinskys, Légers, and Moholy-Nagys she chose to start the museum's collection. Through Aug. 10. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—The eclectic gathering of works from the permanent collection in **"Landscape"** ranges from Jasper Johns's white maps to Ed Ruscha's rows of L.A. streets to Roni Horn's eerie comparison of the body and the earth, "Becoming a Landscape" (1999-2001). The exhibit purports to explore ideas of space and place, an exploration that becomes so oblique at times—witness Fred Tomaselli's great "Gravity's Rainbow" (1999), with its draped chains of pills, flowers, and cutout eyes and mouths—that you may wonder if you've wandered into another exhibit. Through Sept. 18. ♦ **"Remote Viewing: Invented Worlds in Recent Painting and Drawing"** examines eight artists whose work straddles the divide between the abstract and the representational, including Terry Winters, Julie Mehretu, and Carroll Dunham. Through Oct. 9. ♦ **"Banks Violette: Untitled"** contemplates the romantic sublime with a model of a ruined church cast in salt, backed with music by the Black Metal musician Snorre Ruch. This is Violette's first solo show at a museum. Through Oct. 2. ♦ **"Prints Into Drawings,"** a roomful of prints that were made in the last fifty years, illustrates the shared techniques of drawing and printmaking. Through Aug. 28. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Dinosaurs: Ancient Fossils, New Discoveries"** is a review of recent developments in the study of dinosaurs. Through Jan. 8, 2006. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—**"Extreme Textiles: Designing for High Performance"** is a thrilling show, quick to stoke imagination and amazement. Items on view include wing suits for skydivers, fast-deploying webs for riot control, and the Tumbleweed, a giant computerized beach ball that follows the wind on Mars, periodically deflating to collect data. Through Oct. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 9; Saturdays, 10 to 6; and Sundays, noon to 6.)

INSTITUTO CERVANTES

211-215 E. 49th St. (212-308-7720)—Forty-three works by the artist whom David Smith called "the first master of the torch" are on display in **"Julio González: Sculptures and Drawings."** Born into a family of blacksmiths and silversmiths in Barcelona, González (1876-1942) converted his trade into art, studying drawing in night classes before he moved to Paris in 1900. He worked with Brancusi (whose egg-shaped marble sculptures of heads he echoed in bronze with "Le Cagoulard," ca. 1935-36) and Picasso (he helped realize six of his fellow-Spaniard's metal sculptures) and did his own work, which cycled from Cubism to abstraction to representation, more or less inventing welded sculpture in the process. Through June 18. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 12:30 to 6:30, and Saturdays, 10 to 1:30.)

MUSEUM OF BIBLICAL ART

1865 Broadway, at 61st St. (212-408-1500)—**"Coming Home!: Self-Taught Artists, the Bible, and the American South"** covers the gamut of reactions to faith and the church: proselytizing, admonishment, the condemnation of hypocrisy, storytelling. The strangest images are in paintings based on the Book of Revelation—the seven-headed beast of the sea appears at least five times—and Adventist prophecy charts filled with mathematical calculations and verses predicting the world's end (to take place in 1843, according to the Millerite sect; this was followed by the Great Disappointment, in 1844). Jas Johns contributes a pair of "Heaven and Hell Britches" (2000-02), overalls painted with narrative scenes culminating in heaven at the right ankle, hell at the left. In a time of increasing religious fundamentalism, these works by mostly little-known artists (notwithstanding a few big names like Howard Finster and Sister Gertrude Morgan) are a testament to the multitude of ways in which believers can understand and express their faith. Through July 24. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER

22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Greater New York 2005"** collects work by more than a hundred and sixty artists from around the city who have emerged in the past five years. Through Sept. 26. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

QUEEN SOFÍA SPANISH INSTITUTE

684 Park Ave., at 68th St. (212-628-0420)—The works in **"From Goya to Sorolla"** had a short way to travel for the exhibit: they all come from the Hispanic Society of America (now in its hundred-and-first year) up on 155th Street. But Audubon Terrace is off the beaten path for most museumgoers, and this show may be a more convenient way to view some of the Society's excellent collection of Spanish art. A roomful of nineteenth-century paintings reads like a single thread pulled from the cloth of the European salon tradition; a vitrine of small Goya drawings can be viewed as intimately as if they were in a private home. Large-scale paintings are gathered in a room upstairs, and a long gallery in the basement includes some early-twentieth-

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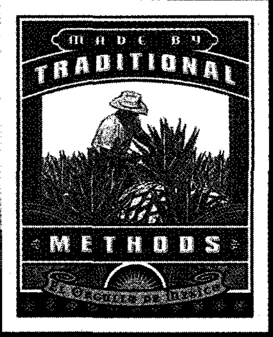
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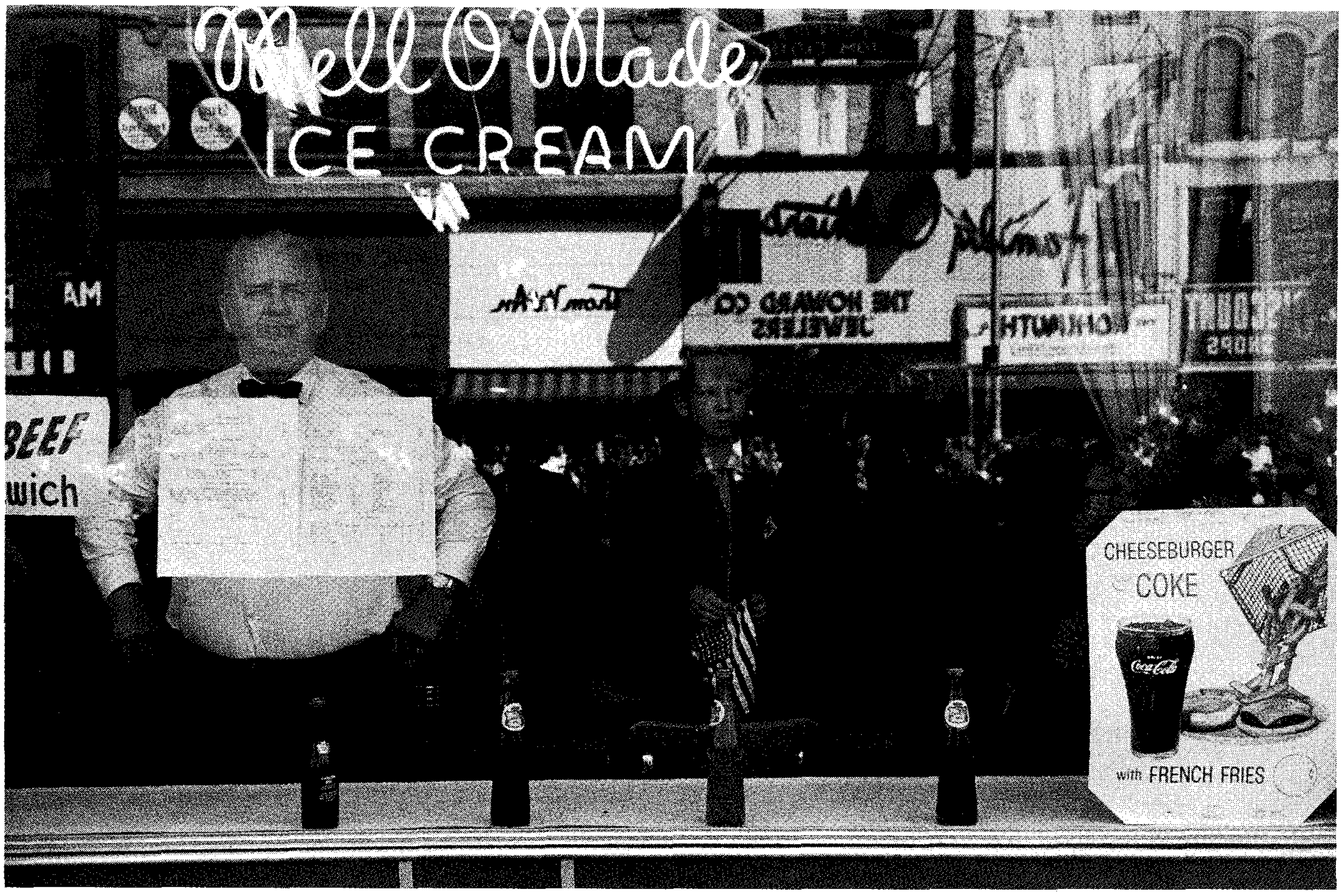

"Newark, New Jersey," from 1962, by Lee Friedlander, at the Museum of Modern Art's retrospective of his work.

century works. Through July 30. (Open Mondays through Thursdays, 10 to 6, Fridays, 10 to 8, and Saturdays, 11 to 5.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Bill Traylor, William Edmondson, and the Modernist Impulse."** Through June 26. ♦ The artist who got under Giuliani's skin with a Madonna embellished with elephant dung sticks to a lighter medium here: watercolor. Chris Ofili's **"Afro Muses"** (1995-2005) are free-form, woozily outlined "imaginary portraits" drawn from history, memory, and everyday life. Some are men, some are women, and a few are flowers and birds—although avian and floral motifs preside throughout in brightly flocked caftans and heaping sculptural hairdos. Their goofy good will is heartwarming, but a little goes a long way. A hundred and eighty-one framed "Muses" arranged in grids fill the walls, and their manic whimsy quickly wearies; half as many would suffice. Through July 3. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

CLAES OLDENBURG AND COOSJE VAN BRUGGEN
Limp cloth sculptures of musical instruments and metronomes. A soft viola hangs from a nail on the wall; lutes slump like overripe fruit; a pair of bright-yellow French horns, one in cloth and one in steel, unwind their loops of tubing. What music there is is visual; the instruments themselves passively resist the making of sounds. Through June 18. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292.)

RICHARD WATHEN
Beautiful, uneasy portraits of innocents: prelapsarian children, their ages and genders unclear, hold soft rabbits or flowers; animals gather peaceably in vague, misty landscapes. The scenes are eerily still; viewing them is like finding oneself in close proximity to a bird or a fawn and not wanting to breathe lest it be scared off. The slight undercurrent of menace, which arises from the strange ambiguity of the situations depicted, is cut by the delicacy of the paint handling and palette and by the sense that nothing this pretty could pose a real threat. Through June 16. (Salon 94, 12 E. 94th St. 646-672-9212.)

Short List

BILL BURKE: Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010. Through June 18. **JACK GOLDSTEIN:** Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-744-7400. Through June 11. **JULIE MEHRETU:** Projectile, 37 W. 57th St. 212-688-1585. Through June 18. **"POP":** Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677. Through July 1.

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

JOHN DUGDALE
Like Julia Margaret Cameron, whose work he emulates, Dugdale casts his friends and family members in allegorical, mythological, or Biblical roles. But in this case the photographer also joins the cast of characters, usually in the nude. Not only is there no hint of postmodern irony in the work, but its shameless sincerity is almost as anachronistic as its antique processing technique. Dugdale's new suite of gold-toned albumen prints is typically handsome and includes portraits of his mother, his sister, his lover (cradling a lamb), and a cherubic little boy; it all recalls Mapplethorpe as much as Cameron. Through June 18. (ClampArt, 531 W. 25th St. 646-230-0020.)

ROBBERT FLICK
Although there's a conceptual rigor to all the landscape work that Flick has been making since the seventies, his pictures are not without wit or formal elegance. Of the three series excerpted here, the most arresting are his recent "Sequential Views" of Los Angeles, which turn videos shot from Flick's moving car into flattened movies that suggest Ed Ruscha processed by Sol LeWitt. Earlier black-and-white images of a parking garage and Midwestern farmland have a familiar modernist austerity (Walker Evans, Aaron Siskind, and Lewis Baltz all come to mind), yet there's nothing retro about Flick's cool, crisp compositions. Through June 18. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave. 212-989-7600.)

NINA KATCHADOURIAN
We supposedly treat our favorite brand names "like family." Katchadourian takes this marketing truism at face value in "The Genealogy of the Supermarket," a wall-sized family tree in which, for example, the St. Pauli Girl marries Samuel Adams, giving birth to the Brawny paper-towels man, who enters into a domestic partnership with Mr. Clean and adopts the Gerber baby. Exploring the ties of kinship on a different level is a suite of videos in which Katchadourian, who grew up in the U.S., and her parents, who were brought up elsewhere, work with a professional accent coach to learn each other's singular inflections. Through June 25. (Meltzer, 516 W. 20th St. 212-727-9330.)

MONA KUHN
Kuhn's photographs of naked young men and women lounging around in summer-house interiors are neither prurient nor smarmy, but you still have to get past their self-conscious artiness. Happily, Kuhn's references to the classic nude tend to dissolve in the shimmer of heat generated by the out-of-focus spaces between lithe, tanned bodies. Working with friends in naturist enclaves in the South of France, the photographer (who says she wears only flip-flops on the job) conjures a mood of innocent intimacy that's more idyllic than erotic. Through June 18. (Cowles, 537 W. 24th St. 212-741-8999.)

JOHN MULLEN
A series of acrylic paintings, all in a standard twenty-six-by-twenty-inch format, describe the slow-building effects of natural forces on the landscape. The images suggest the steady work of water, wind, and

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sunrays; the pry of expanding ice; and the grinding of rocks over the course of centuries. The palette—greenish yellows, orangey reds, charcoal grays—and the vocabulary of abstract gestures also set these apart from traditional forms of landscape painting. Through June 18. (Scott, 529 W. 20th St. 646-486-7004.)

TOBIAS PUTRIH

Two sail-like sculptures power Putrih's show—a pair of thin white cloths stretched against guy wires into gracefully fluted floor-to-ceiling curves. It's kinesthetically and visually cool, if rather restrained. A tiny video animation of morphing lines and angles set in a wall peephole is similarly quiet, and the interesting narration by the poet Stuart Krimko is marred by its stagy, whispered delivery via headphones, a method that has lately become an installation cliché. On view in the back room is a trio of Putrih's biomorphic stacked-cardboard towers, which can also be seen to excellent effect at P.S. 1's "Greater New York 2005"; the wavy papers that separate layers of cardboard are aligned, making the sculptures see-through at certain angles. Through June 25. (Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 212-633-6999.)

WILHELM SASNAL/JÖRG IMMENDORFF

Largely produced during a just-completed residency at the Chinati Foundation, in Marfa, Texas, the Polish artist's new works turn his casual-observer approach to the American South's landscape and Prohibition-era history. Purposefully banal small paintings of cacti and birds are nestled next to large-scale black ink drawings of moonshine smugglers. It's a skillfully rendered show, yet one whose subject might ultimately resonate more with a non-American audience. The back room features small, energetic drawings by Jörg Immendorff, including works from his celebrated "Café Deutschland" series, from the nineteen-seventies and eighties. Through June 18. (Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663.)

PIERRE SOULAGES

The luminous, murky brown in these works on paper turns out to be walnut stain, spread across the surface in layers and horizontal registers, like in a Rothko. The stain picks up the texture of the paper and shades the minute splinters of wood on the surface, as if reminding the paper of its source. It's a signature medium for Soulages, who's been using stain (always walnut) since the nineteen-forties, but it resonates differently in every age. At mid-century, you could compare it to Pollock's use of non-art materials like enamel house paint; now its relationship with photography and film—the transparent negative, the shine of light captured by the medium—feels apt. Through June 25. (Haim Chanin, 210 Eleventh Ave. 646-230-7200.)

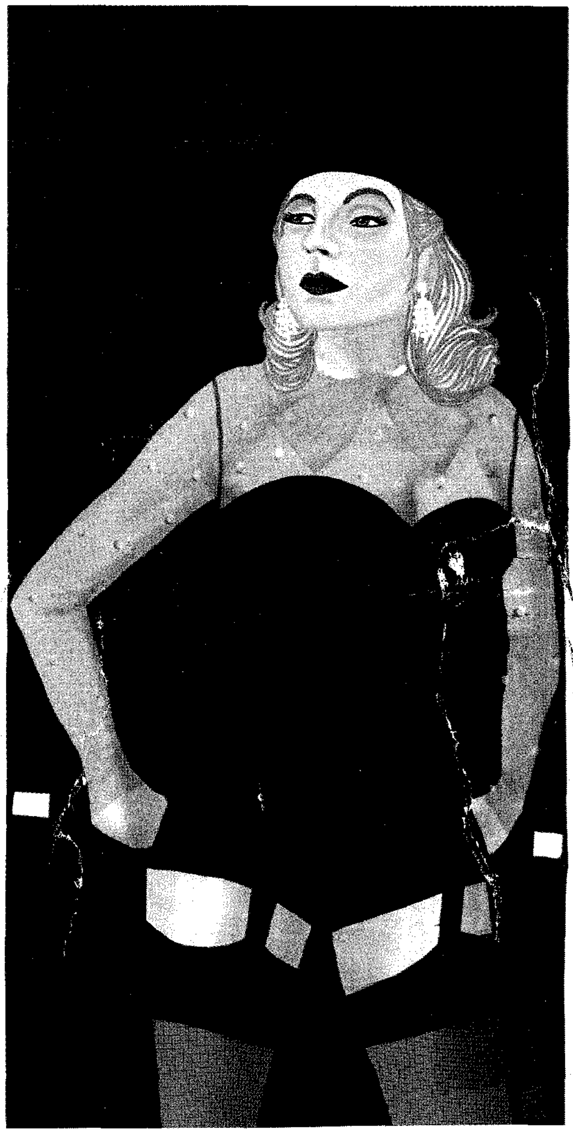
Short List

SOPHIE CALLE: Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105. Through June 30. **GREGORY CREWDSON:** Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 212-206-9100. Through June 18. **JASPER JOHNS:** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200. Through June 25. **RINKO KAWAUCHI:** Cohan and Leslie, 138 Tenth Ave. 212-206-8710. Through June 18. **JOAN MITCHELL:** Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727. Through June 25. **MALCOLM MORLEY:** Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 212-999-7337. Through June 25. **RICHARD PRINCE:** Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300. Through June 18. **NEO RAUCH:** Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070. Through June 18. **PIERRE SOULAGES:** Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 212-366-4774. Through June 11. **SOPHIE VON HELLERMANN:** Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 212-463-7770. Through June 18. **ANDREA ZITTEL:** Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000. Through June 18.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

PANAMARENKO

Flight's place in the artist's imagination dates back to Leonardo and beyond, to Daedalus (the mythical sculptor) and Icarus. The Belgian artist Panamarenko picks up the thread with flying machines and whirligigs that mimic the aerodynamics of birds, bugs, and dinosaurs. "Rucksack" is a strap-on flight mechanism, while the wheeled "Hinky Pinky Prova" is propelled by steam and turbine. His devices are at their best when they're allowed to stand alone; "Brazil," based on a character in Terry Gilliam's delirious sci-fi film, includes a glossily painted bronze figure that detracts from the majestic winged apparatus attached to its shoulders. Through June 11. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 212-226-3232.)



At MOMA, the German actress Hanna Schygulla kicks off a series of her films with an interview and a musical performance on June 9.

DIVYA SRINIVASAN

Short List

ALBERTO CASADO: Art in General, 79 Walker St. 212-219-0473. Through June 25. **THURSTON HOPKINS:** Leica, 670 Broadway. 212-777-3051. Through June 18. **"OK/OKAY":** Swiss Institute, 495 Broadway, 212-925-2035; and Grey Art Gallery, 100 Washington Sq. E. 212-998-6780. Through July 16.

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE

Over the next two weeks, the elegant, charismatic company presents Christopher Newton's restaging of Frederick Ashton's "Sylvia," last year's "Raymonda," by Anna-Marie Holmes, and the much anticipated Michel Fokine celebration, which features the New York revival première of "Petrouchka." To see the cast lists, visit www.abt.org. ♦ June 7 and June 9-10 at 8 and June 8 and June 11 at 2 and 8: "Raymonda." ♦ June 13-14 at 8 and June 15 at 2 and 8: "Sylvia." ♦ June 16-17 and June 20-21 at 8 and June 18 at 2 and 8 (Fokine celebration): "Les Sylphides," "Petrouchka," "Le Spectre de la Rose," and "Polovtsian Dances." (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000. Through July 16.)

NEW YORK CITY BALLET

The season continues, with Susan Stroman's crowd-pleasing "Double Feature," inspired by silent-film melodramas, and other repertory pieces, including Christopher Wheeldon's lighthearted dance, "Carnival of the Animals." June 21 ushers in a week of Balanchine's "A Midsummer Night's Dream." A milestone also pops up during this period: after a quarter century with City Ballet, Jock Soto gives his final performances in the June 19 matinée, dancing in five works back to back. To see the cast lists, visit www.nycballet.com. ♦ June 7 at 7:30: "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet," "The Cage," "Concertino," and "West Side Story Suite." ♦ June 8 at 8: "Symphony in Three Movements," "Octet," and "West Side Story Suite." ♦ June 9-10 at 8, June 11 at 2 and 8, and June 12 at 3: "Double Feature." ♦ June 14 at 7:30: "Carnival of the Animals," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," and "Symphony in Three Movements." ♦ June 15 at 8: "Fanfare," "Tarantella," "Morgen," and "Stravinsky Violin Concerto." ♦ June 16 at 8: "Carnival of the Animals," "Symphony in Three Movements," and "Fanfare." ♦ June 17 at 8: "Chiaroscuro," "Tarantella," "Morgen," and "Carnival of the Animals." ♦ June 18 at 2: "Carnival of the Animals," "After the Rain," "Tarantella," and "Fanfare." ♦ June 18 at 8: "Morgen," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," and "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet." ♦ June 19 at 3 (a farewell to Jock Soto): "Excerpt from 'West Side Story Suite,'" "Barber Violin Concerto," "Liturgy," "Chiaroscuro," and "Excerpt from 'Union Jack.'" ♦ June 21 at 7:30: "A Midsummer Night's Dream." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through June 26.)

"TENSE DAVE"

In a new piece by the Australian collaborative Chunky Move, four psychodramas unfold on a revolving stage that holds multiple adjoining rooms, like a doll house. Jodie Fried's ingenious set steals some thunder from the troubled characters—a foot fetishist, a suicidal girl in a white nightgown, a man bewildered by an Ikea instruction leaflet, and Dave, who stumbles from room to room. The characters' isolated lives intersect, sometimes humorously, sometimes with grisly consequences. Their constrained movement reflects the tension of the characters' inner worlds. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. June 7-11 at 7:30.)

SEÁN CURRAN COMPANY

Curran's new evening-length work, "Art/Song Dance," bridges several forms: not only dance bu musical theatre and opera as well. The composer Ricky Ian Gordon accompanies four vocalists singing his exquisite settings of poems by Langston Hughes, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and others. Though Curran can sometimes let the lyrics guide him into Broadway clichés, his choreography mirrors the intricate patterns of the music and finds fresh feeling in conventional material. Other work in his season at the Joyce includes the solo "St. Petersburg Waltz," the duet "Companion Dances," and the ensemble piece

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"Sonata: We Are What We Were." (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 7-10 at 8, June 11 at 2 and 8, and June 12 at 2 and 7:30.)

BILL T. JONES/ARNIE ZANE DANCE COMPANY
For three nights at City College, the company performs "Reading, Mercy and 'The Artificial Nigger,'" Jones's engrossing work from 2003, in which Flannery O'Connor's short story "The Artificial Nigger" is read aloud while dancers alternate roles in a shifting stream of interpretations. A woman plays a man; a black or Asian dancer plays a white person. The program also includes excerpts from Jones's work in progress "Blind Date," which contrasts current American political realities with the enlightened ideals of the country's founders. As dancers move to strains of Bach, a disembodied voice asks questions like "What is patriotism?" and "Is a patriot a good person?" With original music and arrangements by Daniel Bernard Roumain. (Aaron Davis Hall, W. 135th St. at Convent Ave. 212-650-7100. June 16-18 at 7:30.)

"RAIN"
Quebec's Cirque Éloize eschews animals and greasepaint in favor of high-flying stunts and surreally beautiful images. Its latest spectacle, set on a vaudeville-era stage, offers plenty of both. The gymnastic daring is impressive, but the show's real strength is the director Daniele Finzi Pasca's eye for composition. His best scenes, like the one in which a lissome girl spins from a rope behind a translucent red curtain, have the feeling of color-saturated paintings coming to life. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. June 8-10 and June 15-17 at 7, June 11 and June 18 at 2 and 8, and June 12 and June 19 at 1 and 7. Through July 10.)

"DANCING IN THE STREETS"
Two programs of free dance run on successive weekends as part of the annual summer site-specific outdoor festival. On June 11, Battleworks Dance Company presents repertory work and a post-performance jam session. On June 18, various groups come together for "Rhythms of Resistance," conceived by the percussionist David Pleasant, who calls the event a "rhythmic tapestry" of claps, stomps, and instruments. (Coffey Park, Red Hook, Brooklyn. For more information, visit www.dancinginthestreets.org. No tickets necessary. June 11 and June 18 at 2.)

DONNA UCHIZONO
In her new piece, "Approaching Green," the elegant formalist choreographer draws on the experience of witnessing an Indian guru hug more than five thousand people in fifteen hours. Struck by the guru's acceptance of human beings at all ages, Uchizono created a work about the aging process that is both playful and pensive. Her longtime collaborator Guy Yarden provides the score. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. June 9-12 at 8:30.)

"TENEBRAE"
The Construction Company presents a new work by Christopher Caines Dance Company, set to "Lamentations" and "Spem in Alium," by Thomas Tallis, in honor of the composer's five-hundredth birthday. The piece is accompanied by a forty-voice choir, conducted by Kristina Boerger. Also on the program is "Can't Sleep," from 2004, which uses "Cabaret Songs," by William Bolcom and Arnold Weinstein. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. June 16-19 at 8:30.)

ADAM MILLER DANCE PROJECT
The young Hartford company has its first season at the Joyce SoHo, presenting an eclectic program that includes a duet from Pilobolus's "Lands Edge," a new dance by Miller that pays homage to film noir, a quartet by Sara Sweet Rabidoux (of the group Hoi Polloi) called "A Minor Form of Despair," and other works. (155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. June 9-12 at 8.)

PASCAL RIOULT DANCE THEATRE
The French-born choreographer sets his highly musical dances in provocative imaginary worlds. In last year's "Firebird," reprised here, a girl in white scampers through a dark, primordial society, transforming it. This year's Stravinsky entry is a febrile, ritualistic "Les Noces." As it opens, men and women dressed only in underwear are segregated into two chambers; they jab the air with high, sharp kicks. And in excerpts from the new "Kansas City Orfeo" Carlos Molina, of A.B.T., romances Penelope Gonzalez's Eurydice, styled as a speakeasy dancer whose underworld ties are to the Mob. With live music by the Juilliard Jazz Ensemble, playing Bennie Moten and Count Basie. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 14 at 7:30, June 15-17 at 8, June 18 at 2 and 8, and June 19 at 2 and 7:30.)

"GOING THROUGH FILTER . . . TO SEE YOU"
The choreographer Nami Yamamoto curates a multidisciplinary show at the Brooklyn Arts Exchange, where she is now an artist-in-residence. In "?UX=?UR," the dancer Takemi Kitamura looks at how information creates identity; in "Dreamlife of a Garden Gnome," puppeteers (including Lake Simons, of "Symphonie Fantastique") work with Matthew Acheson to dramatize the adventures of a kidnapped garden ornament. (421 Fifth Ave., at 8th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn. 718-832-0018. June 17-18 at 8.)

PHILADANCO
The energetic company from Philadelphia performs at the Prospect Park Band Shell, in Park Slope, part of the Celebrate Brooklyn! summer festival. (9th St. at Prospect Park W. No tickets necessary. June 18 at 8.)

"OVERHEAD"
In an ensemble piece by Elke Rindfleisch, intended to stress the contrast between outdoor and indoor dance, spectators assemble on the rooftop of her Wallabout Studio, on the southern edge of Williamsburg, to watch dancers perform on a nearby roof, then descend the stairs to the studio to watch dancing in an enclosed space. (50 Taaffe Pl., Brooklyn. 917-251-4561. June 8-12 at 8:15.)

OUT OF TOWN

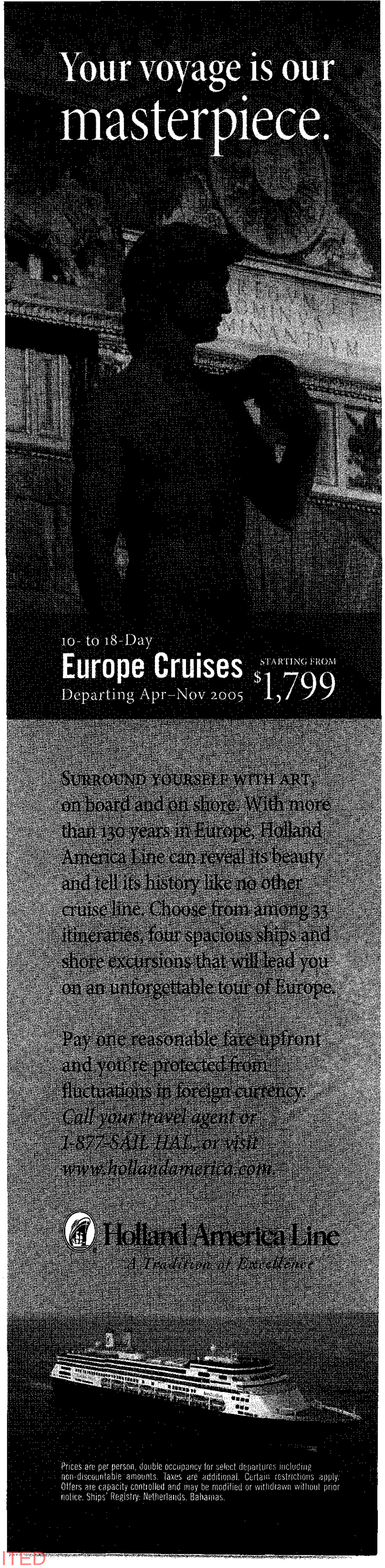
JACOB'S PILLOW
Another summer of dance in the verdant Berkshires starts on June 18 with a gala performance featuring Savion Glover, Ben Munisteri Dance Projects, and dancers from the Pillow's school. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. June 18 at 8.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

"MET IN THE PARKS"
The Metropolitan Opera brings its plein-air productions to the city's parks once more. There won't be any scenery or fancy costumes, but the atmosphere is festive and the performances are free. The first offering is **"Tosca,"** featuring Aprile Millo, Francisco Casanova, and James Morris in the leading roles; Derrick Inouye conducts. (Great Lawn, Central Park. June 14./Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx. June 17.) ♦ Clifton Forbis and Irina Mishura head the cast of **"Samson et Dalila"**; the venerable Julius Rudel is on the podium. (Great Lawn, Central Park. June 15./Richmond County Bank Ballpark, Staten Island. June 18./Prospect Park, Brooklyn. June 21.) (All performances begin at 8. No tickets required. For more information, call 212-362-6000.)

ENCOMPASS NEW OPERA THEATRE: "A GERTRUDE STEIN MUSICAL TRILOGY"
Virgil Thomson's grand operas on texts by Stein were crucial influences on what would become the "downtown" school of composition. So it's natural that this intrepid company (directed by Nancy Rhodes, who studied with Thomson) should approach its thirtieth anniversary by staging two chamber operas with Stein librettos—Thomson's "Capital Capitals" and Ned Rorem's "Three Sisters Who Are Not Sisters"—along with a new work based on her life by the composer William Banfield and the poet Karren LaLonde Alenier. (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. June 15-17 at 8 and June 18 at 2 and 8.)

AMATO OPERA
The Lower East Side's shoestring chamber-opera company closes its season with two final performances of **"L'Elisir d'Amore,"** directed by Maestro Anthony Amato. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. June 11 at 7 and June 12 at 2:30.)



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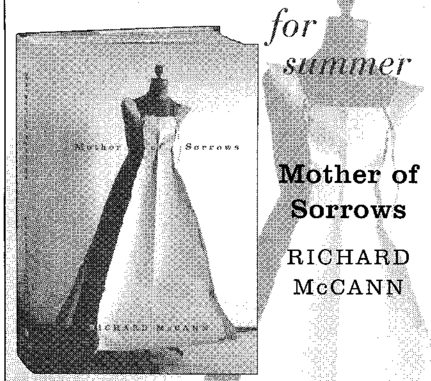
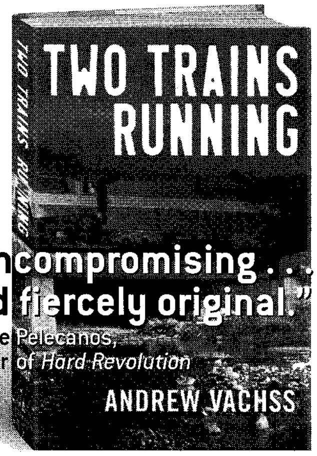


Mother of Sorrows

RICHARD McCANN

“Almost unbearably beautiful.”
—Michael Cunningham, author of *The Hours*

“Exciting” *for summer*



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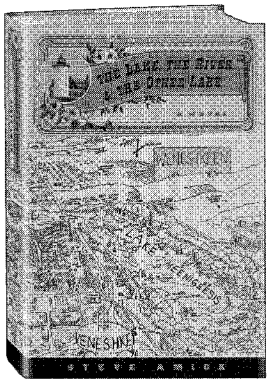
—George Pelecanos, author of *Hard Revolution*

“HUMOROUS” FOR SUMMER

THE LAKE, THE RIVER & THE OTHER LAKE

STEVE AMICK



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ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Lorin Maazel, back at the helm for the final few weeks of the season, leads the orchestra in a pair of programs illuminated by the candlepower of two major artists. Deborah Voigt, whose dramatic presence has grown even as her physique has slimmed down, lends her voluptuous voice to Berg’s “Seven Early Songs,” a waymark between the chromatic intimacies of Wagner’s “Siegfried Idyll” and the post-Wagnerian grandeur of Bruckner’s Third Symphony. (June 9 at 7:30 and June 10-11 at 8.) ♦ The violinist Gil Shaham, another artist of luxuriant expressivity, performs Sibelius’s Violin Concerto on one of those anything-but-German programs, which also includes Sibelius’s “Swan of Tuonela,” Dvořák’s “Carnival Overture,” and the Suite No. 2 from Roussel’s ballet “Bacchus et Ariane.” (June 15-16 at 7:30, June 17 at 11 A.M., and June 18 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

RIVERSIDE SYMPHONY
Shai Wosner, a noted young Israeli-American pianist, is the guest for the conductor George Rothman’s latest program, which features Haydn’s Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major and Honegger’s Concertino along with Mendelssohn’s “Italian” Symphony and a new work by David Crumb. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. June 9 at 8.)

MANHATTAN PHILHARMONIC
The radiant mezzo-soprano Jennifer Larmore and the eminent composer-pianist Lukas Foss are the soloists in a program of works by Mozart (the Piano Concerto No. 17), Berlioz (“La Mort de Cléopâtre”), and Beethoven (the “Eroica” Symphony); Peter Tiboris conducts. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. June 11 at 7:30.)

“NEW PATHS IN MUSIC” FESTIVAL
David Alan Miller leads a chamber orchestra in the finale to a mini-festival of works by composers from Portugal, Australia (featuring Carl Vine and Ross Edwards), and Lithuania (including Osvalda Balakauskas); a concert of chamber works (with the pianist Lisa Moore and the Cassatt String Quartet) is offered in the afternoon. (St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St. 212-868-4444. June 18 at 2 and 8.)

RECITALS

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ALLIANCE
The soprano Lucy Shelton and the pianist Christopher Oldfather are featured in this annual festival of composers somewhat under the radar—such as Gheorghe Constinescu, a longtime faculty member at Lehman College, whose works will be performed in the opening concert. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. 212-362-8900. June 8 at 7. For a complete schedule, see www.composers.com.)

BETH LEVIN
The pianist, possessed of inquisitive instincts and a strong technique, offers works by Beethoven, Schumann (the “Études Symphoniques”), Shostakovich, and David Del Tredici (“Ballad in Yellow”). (Yamaha Piano Salon, Fifth Ave. at 54th St. 212-339-9995, ext. 227. June 8 at 8.)

ST. LUKE’S CHAMBER ENSEMBLE: “THE OUT-OF-TOWNERS”
“Hudson,” a substantial new work for flute and string trio by the young Texas composer Marcus Karl Maroney, is the highlight of a new music showcase that also features works by Ingram Marshall, David Rakowski, and Anna Weesner; the concert will be repeated upstate at Dia:Beacon on the following day. (Chelsea Art Museum, Eleventh Ave. at 22nd St. 212-594-6100. June 11 at 2.)

FRIENDS & ENEMIES OF NEW MUSIC
The longtime concert combine, known for its eclectic approach, offers new and recent works by Tom Cipullo, Ben Yarmolinsky, and Kati Agocs; the performers include the lustrous mezzo-soprano Mary Nessinger. (Abrons Arts Center, Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. June 12 at 3. Tickets at the door.)

BARGEMUSIC
Natasha Paremski, a young pianist in the Romantic mold, performs works by Chopin, Rachmaninoff (the daunting Second Sonata), and Debussy, one of three programs at the floating chamber-music series in mid-June. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. June 16-17 at 7:30. For a full schedule, see www.bargemusic.org.)

ANNIE GOSFIELD
The composer’s latest concert includes “Lost Signals and Drifting Satellites,” a work that mixes the sounds of a violin (played by Jennifer Choi) with the

TABLES FOR TWO
UNA PIZZA NAPOLETANA

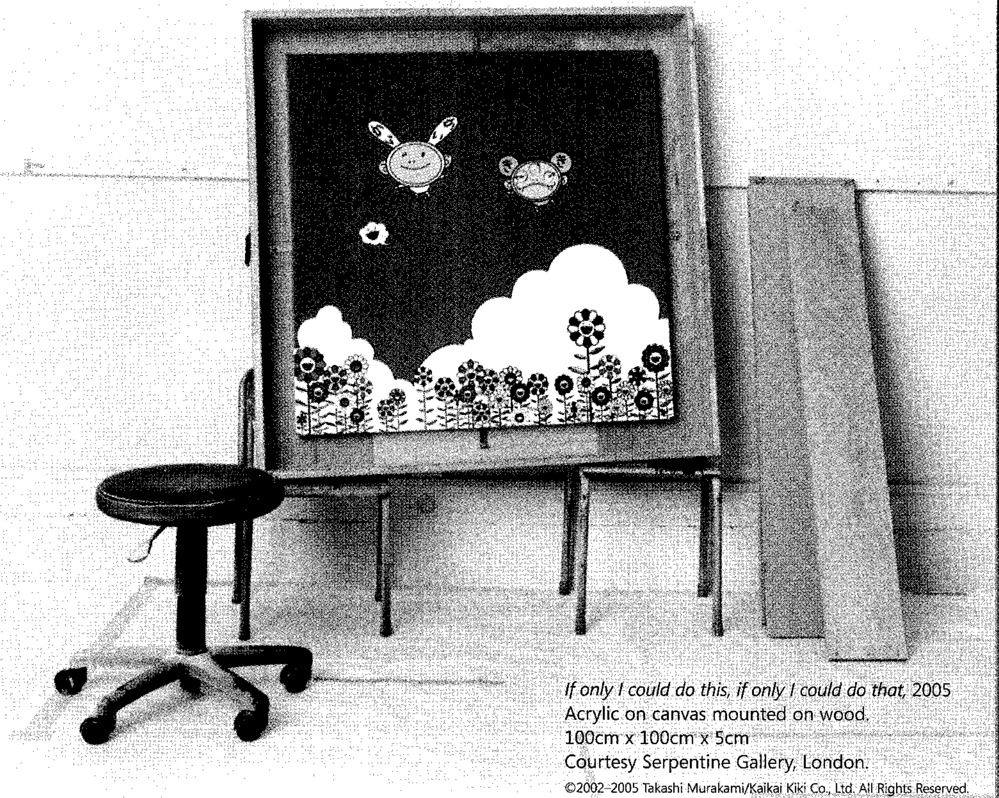
349 E. 12th St. (212-477-9950)—On a recent Friday evening around seven o’clock, a hand-lettered sign had been hung in Una Pizza Napoletana’s window: “Closed until Saturday at 5.” Another sign advised prospective diners that the restaurant was open only until “the dough runs out.” Had there been a mad stampede for pizza? No one knew. (The early hour was unusual; the dough normally lasts until ten.) One stymied couple stood outside. “This is the second time we’ve been here and they’ve been closed,” the man said, shaking his fist in defiance at the dark windows.

Of course, there’s nothing more enticing in Manhattan than a restaurant that plays hard to get—and Una Pizza Napoletana is worth pursuing. The restaurant, which moved from Point Pleasant, New Jersey, to the East Village last October, has a wood-burning brick oven in back and a menu-cum-manifesto that puts its beliefs right up front: “Gas-fired and coal-fired ovens are not used now and never were used in the past to make pizza in Napoli,” it says. Blustery put-downs (“We have no quarrel with the man who sells cheaper pizza . . . he knows how much his is worth!”) and ungrammatical boasts (“Nothing more purer or honestly wholesome can be bought at any price”) follow.

Still, the proprietor, Anthony Mangieri, has earned his brashness. Una Pizza Napoletana’s odd hours reflect the care put into the dough, which is made from pure ground wheat berries, Sicilian sea salt, and water and rises twice over a two-day period. When the pizzas arrive, hot from their two-minute sojourn in the oven’s flames, the beautifully shaped ovals (individually sized and unsliced, Neapolitan style) have slightly charred edges and lightly laid toppings: buffalo mozzarella, San Marzano tomatoes, extra-virgin olive oil. (There are only four varieties to choose from, including a cheeseless Marinara and a tomatoless Bianca.) The dough is thin but never too crisp, sagging just a bit in the middle, where the intensely flavorful oil pools. After such a meal, it’s hard not to feel a little sorry for the late arrivals confronted by the “Closed” sign. But don’t worry: they’ll be back. (Open Thursdays through Sundays for dinner. Pizzas $16.95.)

—*Andrea Thompson*

start something original



If only I could do this, if only I could do that, 2005
Acrylic on canvas mounted on wood.
100cm x 100cm x 5cm
Courtesy Serpentine Gallery, London.
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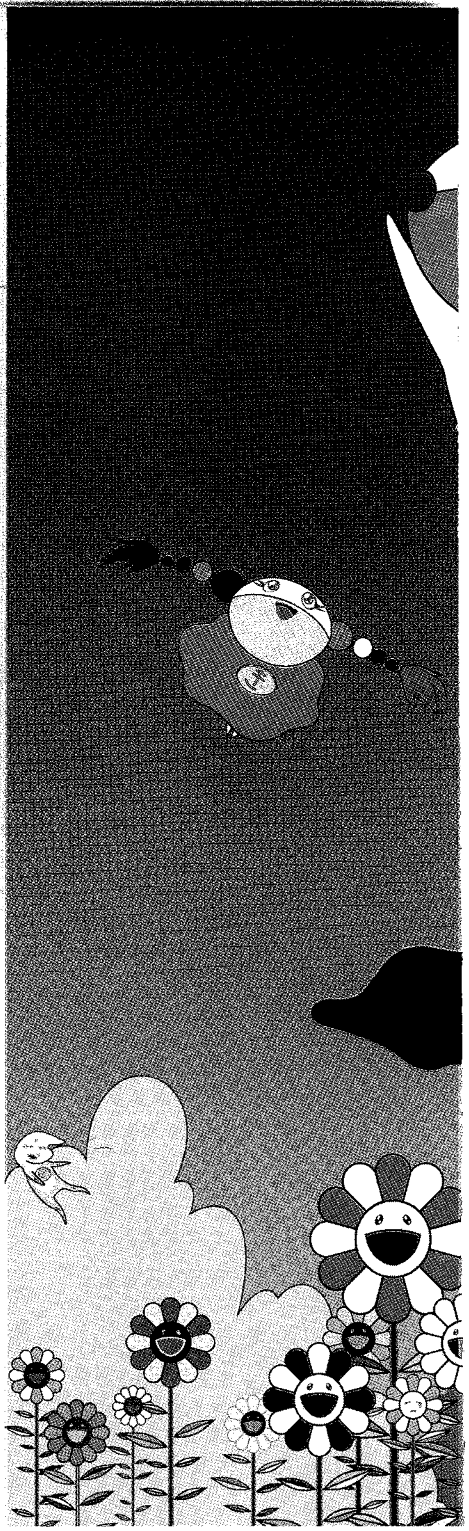


start a revolution

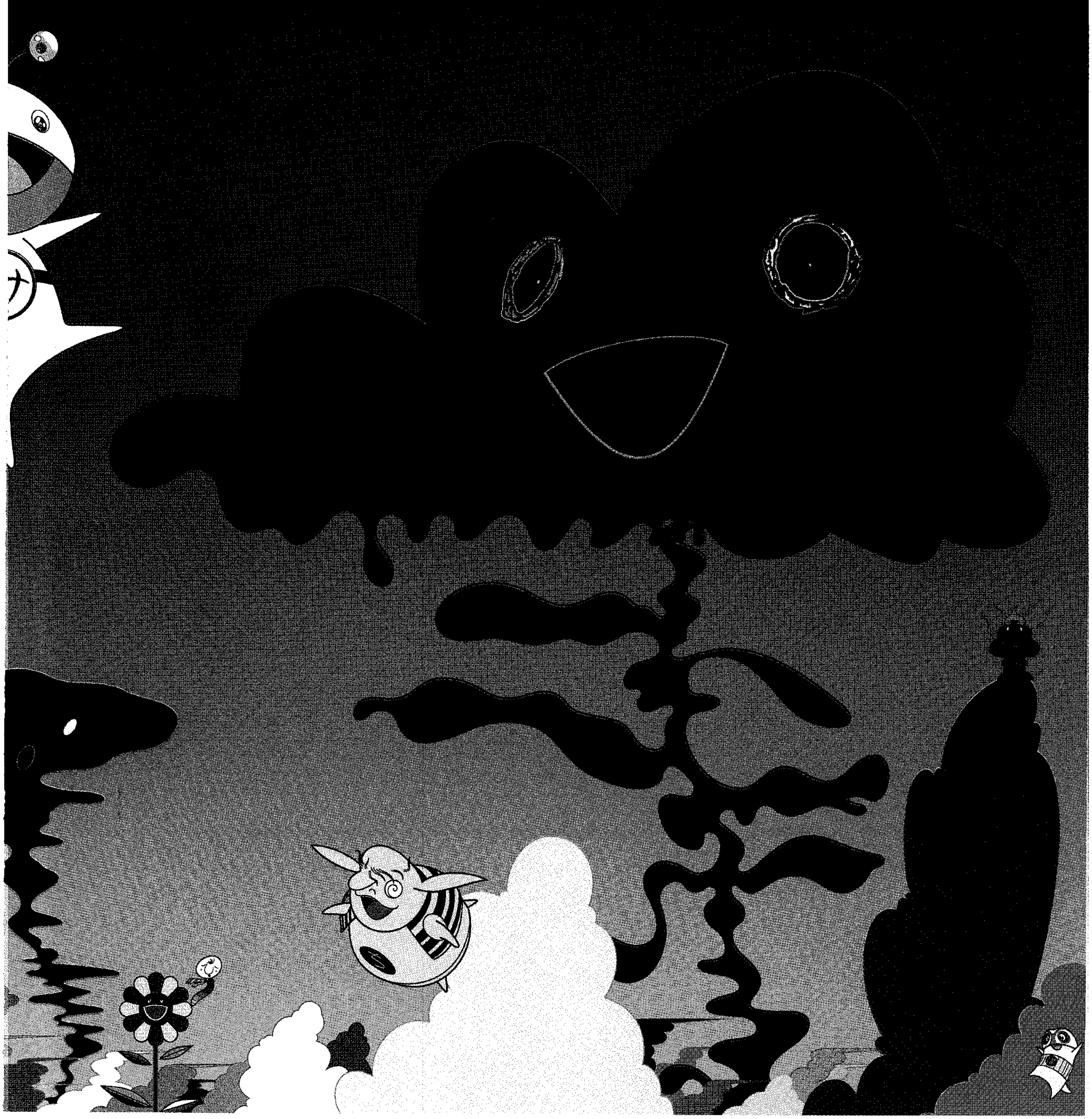
takashi Murakami, the Japanese *phenom* whose Pop-centric mix of *manga* (comic books), anime and the virtual planes of a computer screen bore the hugely influential "Superflat" movement a decade ago, is passionate about the intersection of creation and commerce.

A product of a Japanese culture that steadily seduces its citizens with images of sophisticated luxuries even as it celebrates a near obsession with cartoonish characters—*Hello, Kitty!*—Murakami walks a fine inventive line. His recent collaboration with an upscale fashion designer left some purists puzzled, even as it cemented his reputation among Westerners as that cool artist guy who made the season's most coveted (and mimicked) designer handbag. Still, by his estimation, "A handbag can be seen as art. In 50 years time, I expect this one will be."

Murakami finds value, even beauty, in what is mass-produced, despite also noting the potential destructive power of the consumer machine. Some see the artist as a shrewd businessman, others as the inevitable computer-age evolution of the late Andy Warhol. Murakami produces his provocative inflatable sculptures, as well as his computer-generated images and three-dollar key chains in the "Hiropon Factory"—its name an obvious nod to the Warholian "superstar" era—just outside of Tokyo, where a team of underlings follows his exacting direction.

As prolific as the media-saturated culture that inspires him, his current passion is curating "Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture" for the Japan Society in New York City (April 8–July 24). "Japan is very much like a little boy," says Murakami. "Japanese culture and society were completely flattened [after World War II]...Japan has not been allowed to mature in many ways, but that is what has led to the formation of the culture that is attracting global attention, as demonstrated in this show."

Murakami, in collaboration with the Public Art Fund, will wrap a banner around the entire facade of the Society's building, blatantly advertising what the city will witness from the exhibition: illustrated subway placards; fanciful, ad-driven imagery in Union Square; a sculpture on Fifth Avenue at 60th Street; and more. Much like the works of Takashi Murakami, the show lifts its themes from the world bazaar, presenting what is ubiquitous and asking that it be seen in a heightened light.



Eco Eco Rangers Earth Force, 2005

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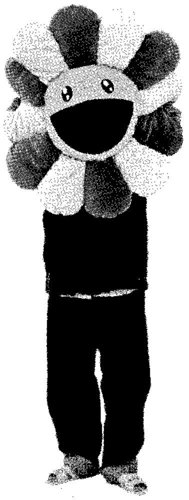
Murakami is passionate about the intersection of creation and commerce.



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tone signals of the Sputnik and Voyager satellites. The performers also include the percussionist David Cossin and the cellist Felix Fan. (The Stone, Avenue C at 2nd St. June 17 at 10. Tickets at the door.)

"FREE FOR ALL AT TOWN HALL": OPUS ONE
A formidable band—the violinist Ida Kavafian, the violist Steven Tenenbom, the cellist Peter Wiley, and the pianist Anne-Marie McDermott—offers piano quartets by Dvořák and Martinů. (123 W. 43rd St. June 19 at 5. Free tickets, which are limited to two per customer, will be available at noon on the day of the performance.)

OUT OF TOWN

"CONSTANTINOPLE"
Christos Hatzis, a Canadian composer of mystical, multicultural works (and a favorite of the St. Lawrence String Quartet), is in the spotlight at the New Haven International Arts and Ideas Festival, where the Gryphon Trio—along with the soprano Patricia O'Callaghan and the Middle Eastern vocalist Maryem Hassan Tollar—will offer the U.S. première of a new multimedia work mixing Christian and Islamic themes. (Shubert Theatre, New Haven, Conn. 888-278-4332. June 10-11 at 8.)

HUDSON VALLEY CHAMBER MUSIC CIRCLE
The annual series, a quiet interlude before the onslaught of the supersized Bard Summerscape schedule, continues with the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio performing trios by Mozart, Brahms (in C Major, Op. 87), and Joan Tower. (Olin Hall, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 518-537-6665. June 18 at 8.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
This esteemed annual series, held in an acoustically crisp shoebox hall, opens with a traditional chamber-music benefit on June 12 before taking a southward turn on the following weekend when the Cuarteto Latinoamericano teams up with the renowned bandoneon player Daniel Binelli for a mini-festival devoted to the music of the tango master Astor Piazzolla. Music by Gershwin and Villa-Lobos graces the second of the two concerts. (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. June 18 at 8 and June 19 at noon.)

MOVIES OPENING

THE ADVENTURES OF SHARK BOY AND LAVA GIRL IN 3-D
Robert Rodriguez wrote and directed this family action adventure, in which a lonely boy's imaginary superhero friends become real. Opening June 10. (In wide release.)

BATMAN BEGINS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening June 15. (In wide release.)

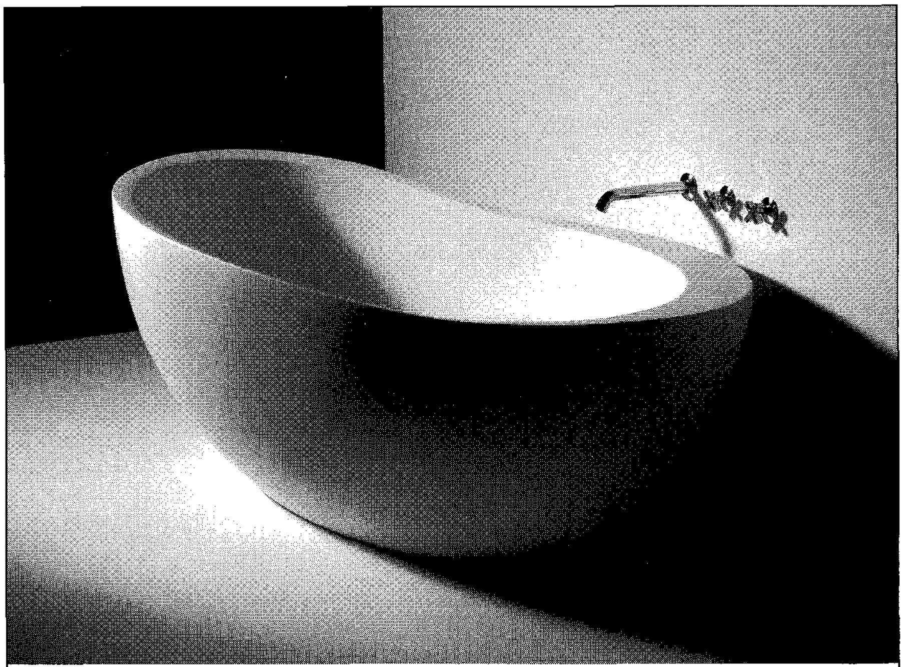
THE DEAL
Two bankers (Christian Slater and Selma Blair) investigate an international oil transaction, in a geopolitical murder mystery directed by Harvey Kahn. Opening June 17. (In wide release.)

5 X 2
François Ozon's new drama, about a failed marriage, unfolds in reverse chronology. In French. Opening June 10. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

THE GREAT WATER
Lem Nikodinoski, a Communist who grew up as an orphan in postwar Stalinist Yugoslavia, reminisces about his childhood, in a drama directed by Ivo Trajkov. In Macedonian and English. Opening June 17. (Quad Cinema.)

HEIGHTS
A drama directed by Chris Terrio, about five interconnected New Yorkers who are all faced with life-changing decisions. With Elizabeth Banks, Glenn Close, and Jesse Bradford. Opening June 10. (Paris and Union Square.)

HIGH TENSION
A French horror movie in which two friends run into trouble with a serial killer while vacationing in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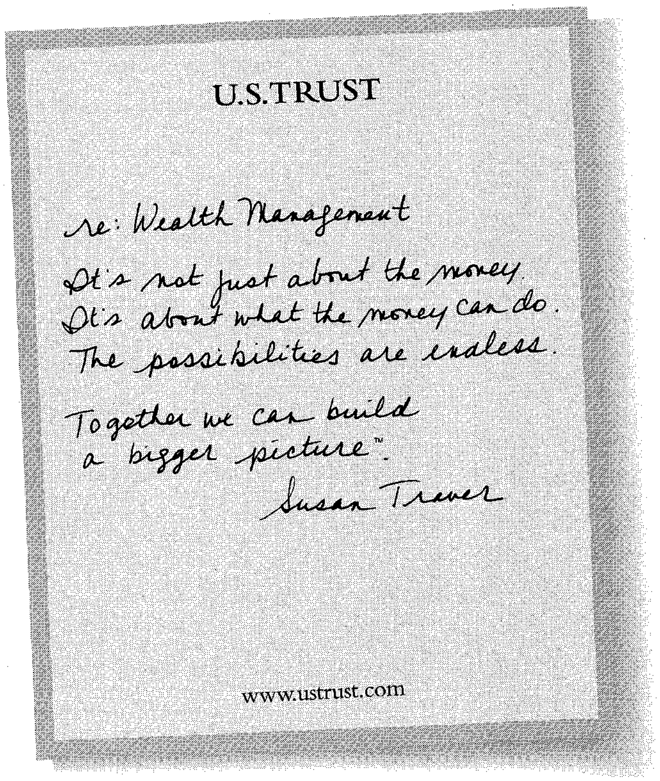
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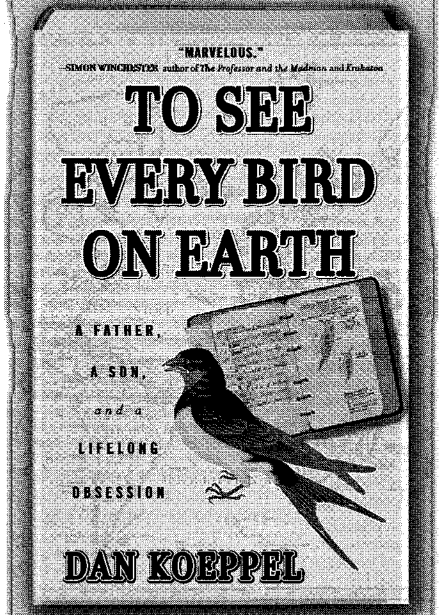
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the country. Directed by Alexandre Aja. In French and English. Opening June 10. (In wide release.)

THE HONEYMOONERS
Cedric the Entertainer plays Ralph Kramden and Mike Epps plays Ed Norton in this adaptation of the TV show. Opening June 10. (In wide release.)

HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE
A new animated adventure from Hayao Miyazaki ("Spirited Away"), about a teen-age girl who must find a way to lift the curse that turned her into an old woman. Opening June 10. (Lincoln Square.)

ME AND YOU AND EVERYONE WE KNOW
A lonely shoe salesman and a performance artist try to make a connection. Directed by Miranda July. Opening June 17. (IFC Center.)

MR. AND MRS. SMITH
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening June 10. (In wide release.)

MY SUMMER OF LOVE
Pawel Pawlikowsky ("Last Resort") directed this drama about the relationship between two teen-age girls (Nathalie Press and Emily Blunt) in Yorkshire, England. With Paddy Considine. Opening June 17. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE PERFECT MAN
A romantic comedy in which a teen-ager (Hilary Duff) invents a secret admirer for her single mom (Heather Locklear) and enlists a man (Chris Noth) to keep up the ruse. Opening June 17. (In wide release.)

WHEEL OF TIME
In Werner Herzog's documentary, the director takes a pilgrimage to a Buddhist holy site in Bodh Gaya, India. Opening June 15. (Film Forum.)

WILD SIDE
A transsexual prostitute leaves her immigrant friends in Paris and returns to her rural childhood home to care for her dying mother. Directed by Sébastien Lifshitz. In French. Opening June 10. (Angelika Film Center.)

NOW PLAYING

BRAZIL
Terry Gilliam's retro-futurist fantasy is like a stoned, slapstick "1984," a nightmare comedy in which the comedy is just an aspect of the nightmarishness. The title refers to pop escapism of the past—what you can only dream about in the squalor and sporadic terrorist violence of an Anglo-American police state "somewhere in the twentieth century." Visually, it's an original, bravura piece of moviemaking, with a weirdly ingenious vertical quality: the camera always seems to be moving up and down, rarely across. The central character (Jonathan Pryce) is a lowly clerk, a drone; in pursuit of the girl (Kim Greist) he has glimpsed in his dreams, he runs afoul of the state apparatus, and there's a superrealistic inevitability about this. The episodes lack dramatic definition, just as the gags do; they all run together and blur. And the film is both torpid and frantic. Yet Gilliam's vision is an organic thing on the screen—and that's a considerable achievement. Pryce's dead-eyed performance is charmless, but Robert De Niro turns up in a cameo role as a prankster daredevil, a freedom fighter; chomping on a cigar and all revved up, he's the life of the party. And Katherine Helmond, as Pryce's mother, delivers an elegant, broad caricature of a woman obsessed with plastic surgery. Released in 1985.—*Pauline Kael* (Sunshine Cinema; June 10-11.)

BROTHERS
A soldier (Ulrich Thomsen), presumed dead in Afghanistan, returns from a brutal imprisonment to his wife (Connie Nielsen) and children in Denmark and finds that they are being taken care of by his formerly shiftless brother (Nikolaj Lie Kaas). The director, Susanne Bier, crafts a dark, gripping tale of a disintegrating marriage, and Thomsen's taut, monosyllabic portrait of a man slowly falling apart is riveting. The film has a rocky beginning—the scenes inside a Taliban prison are overly graphic—but once Thomsen's character returns home, Bier beautifully conveys a family's struggle to cope with the casualties of war. In Danish.—*Bruce Diones* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

CINDERELLA MAN
Russell Crowe teams up with the director Ron Howard for the first time since "A Beautiful Mind," and instead of schizophrenia we get broken ribs. This is the story of the boxer James J. Braddock, who fell from favor during the Great Depression, only to claw his way back and snatch the World Heavyweight title in 1935. Crowe lends the character a determined dourness, refusing to turn Braddock's bewildering comeback into a victory parade—a good thing, too, for without that unsmiling restraint the whole saga might sound too good to be true. Braddock is presented as a man without sin, his wife, Mae (Renée Zellweger), maintains a rosy-cheeked optimism even when food is scarce, and their children form a group portrait of well-scrubbed devotion. Anybody whose memory resounds to "Raging Bull," with its bedevilled hero, will feel badly shortchanged by this picture, yet Howard is the right man for stirring simplicity, and his casting is on the money. Braddock's opponents are gratifyingly bisonlike, and Paul Giamatti has a ball in the role of Joe Gould, the trainer who stood by his man. Who would have bet that the grouch of "American Splendor" could end up so natty and, yes, splendid, in a gray plaid suit and tie?—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 6/6/05.) (In wide release.)

CRASH
A brazenly alive and heartbreaking film about the rage and foolishness of intolerance—the mutual abrasions of white, black, Latino, Middle Eastern, and Asian citizens in the great and strange city of Los Angeles. The movie starts off with separate vignettes in which the characters run afoul of each other, say things better left unsaid, and get into terrible trouble. Later, they cross paths again, sometimes in bizarre coincidences that feel exactly right; some of these scenes play out at the edge of insanity, where contentiousness spills over into tragedy or farce. The furiously candid screenplay was written by Paul Haggis and Robert Moresco, and the picture was directed by Haggis, who, in his first time out as director, demonstrates an amazing skill with actors. Don Cheadle, as a withdrawn, melancholy police detective, is the star, and the other players include Terrence Howard and Thandie Newton as an upper-class African-American couple, Brendan Fraser and Sandra Bullock as an L.A. district attorney and his bitchy wife, Chris (Ludacris) Bridges and Larenz Tate as carjackers, Matt Dillon and Ryan Phillippe as cops, and Shaun Toub as an Iranian shopkeeper who thinks everyone is out to cheat him.—*David Denby* (5/2/05) (In wide release.)

THE HOLY GIRL
Amalia (María Alche), a radiantly beautiful teen-ager growing up in a family-run hotel in a small Argentine city, is pulled between traditional religious teachings that insist on a saintlike career for women and sexual longings that are just as fierce as a teen-age boy's. When a doctor attending a conference rubs up against her in a crowd, she reaches out to him, but he doesn't want an affair; he just wants to touch. Lucrecia Martel shoots her movie with rapt attention to faces and bodies in the foreground while the life of the hotel spins loosely in the background. It's a distinctive visual style, but it's not a dramatic style, and the movie, for all its talent, isn't pulled together enough. Yet Martel is someone to watch: she has a fantastic eye for detail and mood. In Spanish.—*D.D.* (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

KINGS AND QUEEN
Nora (Emmanuelle Devos), a Parisian bourgeoise and gallery manager in her late thirties, goes to Grenoble to visit her father, a famous writer and teacher who is looking after Nora's son for the summer. At the same time, Nora's ex-boyfriend Ismaël (Mathieu Amalric), a manic-depressive with bright eyes and the eager manner of a cocky teen-ager, argues merrily with two orderlies who arrive at his apartment to cart him off to the loony bin. The two narratives never really come together, which is a bit of a surprise. Over the years, we have seen so many French films that have made a fetish of precision that it's startling to see something that is freewheeling, explosive, and rather slovenly. Directed and co-written by Arnaud Desplechin, "Kings and Queen" is, by any normal standard, a mess, yet the movie is full of rhetorical excitement and brilliant moments. In

THE ART OF BEING GLOBAL - *Paula Polito - SVP of Marketing, Merrill Lynch Global Private Client Group*

An architect of change, Ms. Polito and her team transformed marketing for The Bull from an approach focused primarily on stocks and bonds to one of comprehensive wealth management, symbolized in the U.S. by Total Merrill.℠ Here, she offers insights on everything from succeeding in the worldwide marketplace to the etiquette of getting into a cab in Japan.

The global marketplace is open 24/7 - it makes sleep a valuable commodity. Doing business globally is more real-time than ever before. My life adjusted to the global marketplace - people in my position - we all take calls in the middle of the night. Of course, there are major benefits to this; real-time global business makes everyone more dedicated, creates strong partnerships, and equips us all to take immediate advantage of opportunities.

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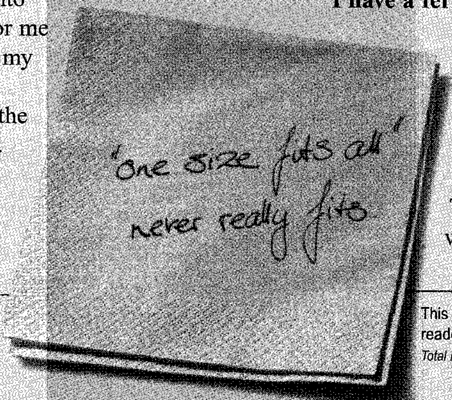

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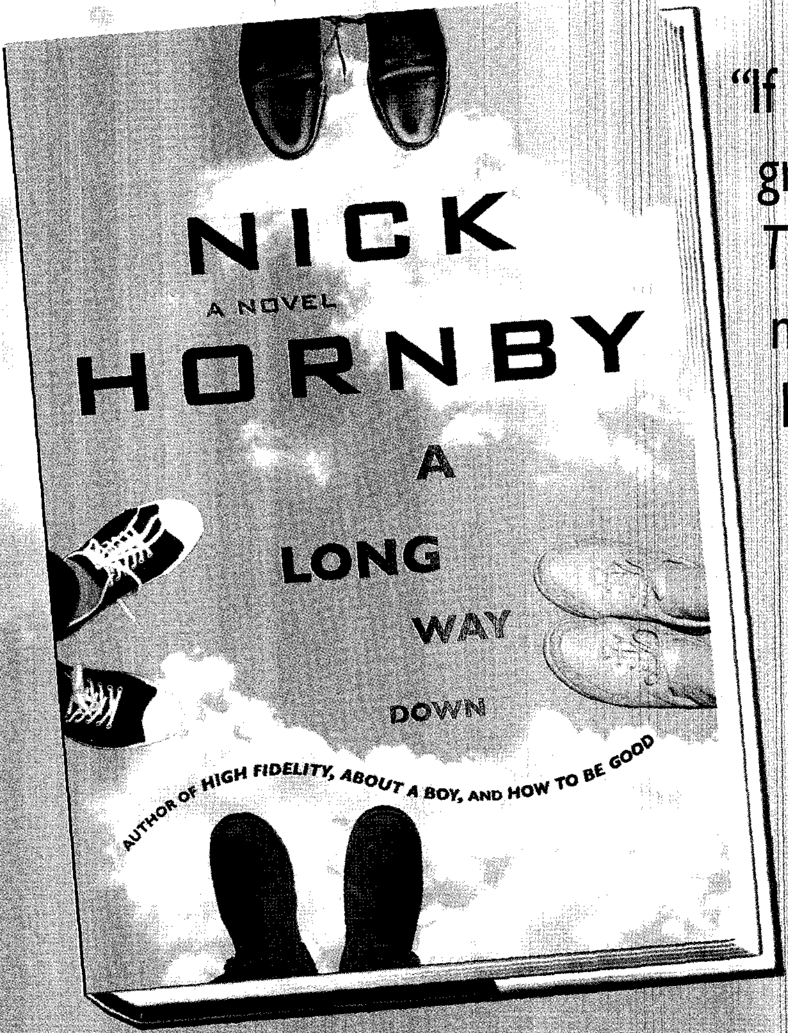
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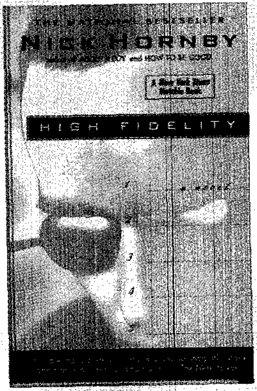
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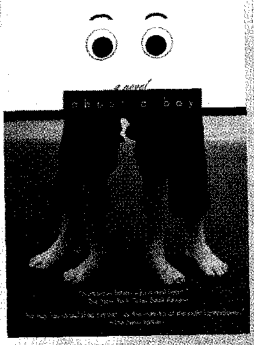
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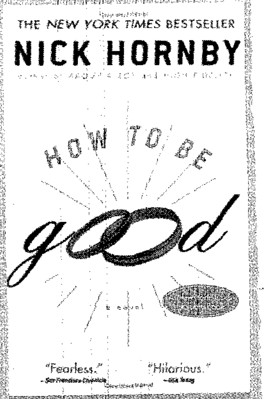
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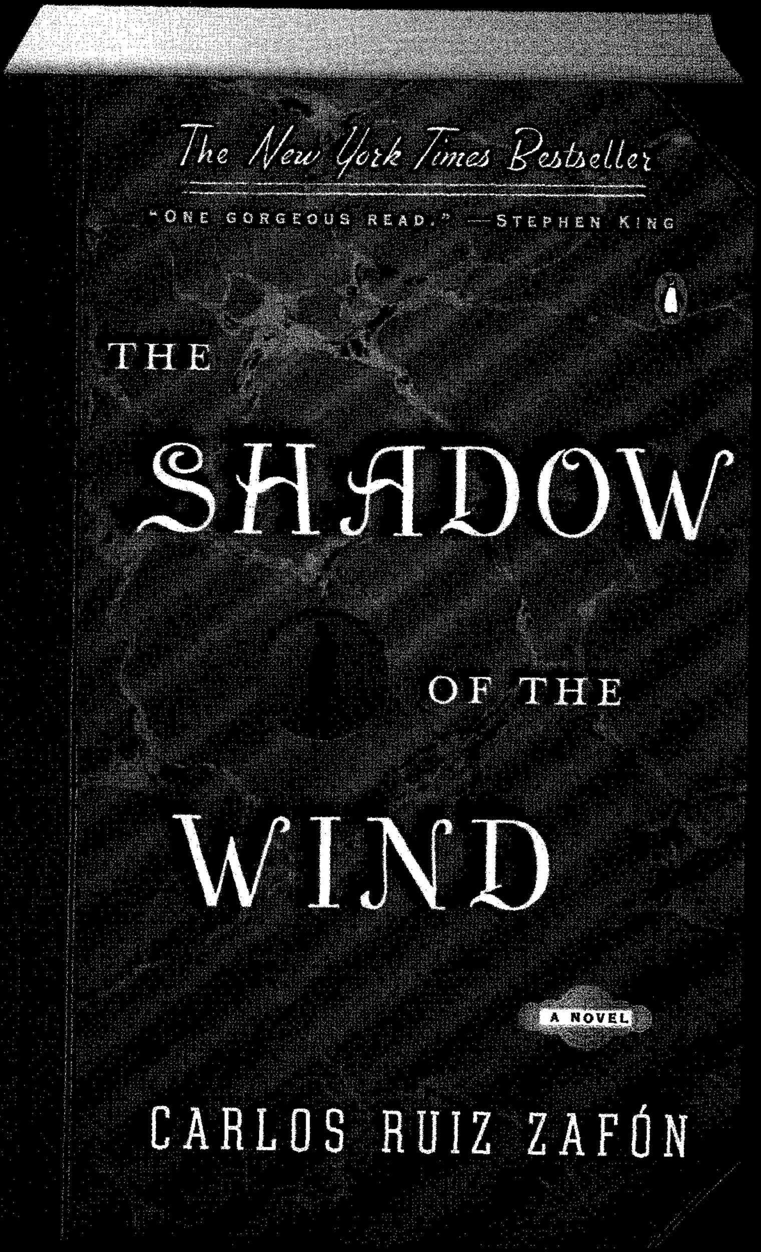
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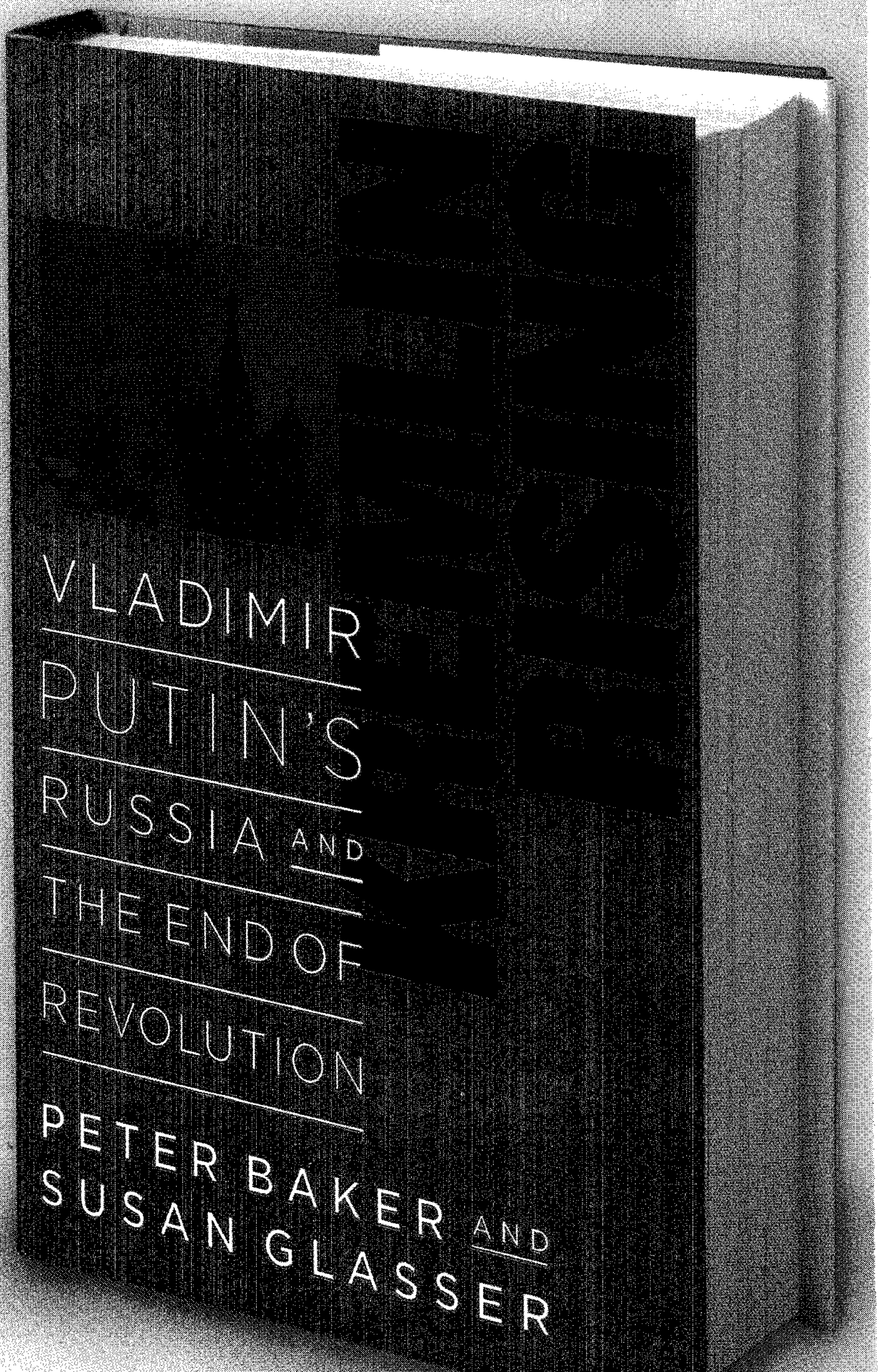
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French, English, and German.—*D.D.* (5/16/05) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

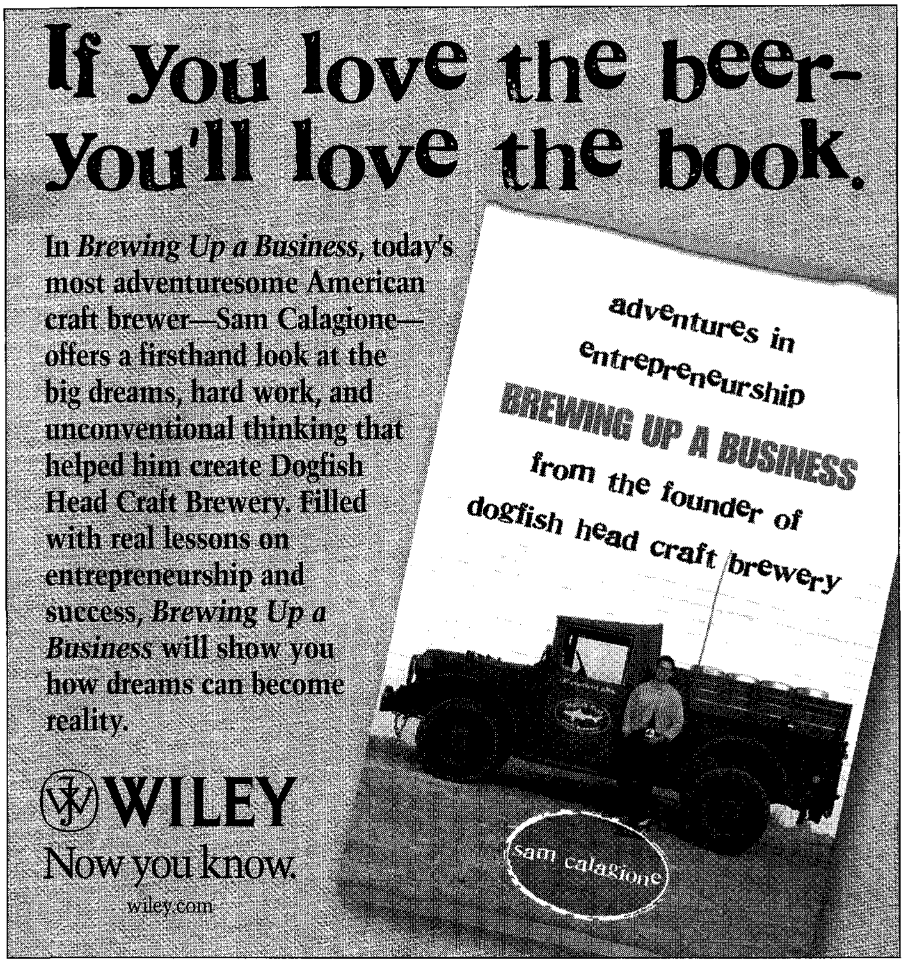
A LEAGUE OF ORDINARY GENTLEMEN
In the fifties, bowling was the ultimate family entertainment and the most watched sport on TV. Its fall from favor and the current campaign to revitalize it are sharply illustrated in Christopher Browne's cheerful and at times poignant documentary. The movie revolves around the rebirth of the Pro Bowlers Association and a handful of veteran pros—including the stoic Walter Ray Williams, Jr., and bad boy Pete Weber—who are competing for the 2003 World Championship. The adventures of these athletes on tour are nicely balanced with scenes from their sometimes less than happy home lives, and the result is a solid drama about sport and sacrifice.—*B.D.* (Sunshine Cinema.)

THE LIVING WORLD
To rescue their beloveds from a castle, two knights must fight a child-eating ogre to the death. The knights (Alexis Loret and Adrien Michaux) wear not armor but bluejeans and oxford shirts, and the women (Christelle Prot and Laurène Cheilan) talk of Jacques Lacan and oversized freezers. The director, Eugène Green, an American who moved to France in 1969, is an expert in Renaissance and Baroque theatre, and his expertise shows, exquisitely, in his homemade legend from 2003 depicting modern people graced with ancient customs. Green's specialty, the use of antique French diction in the dialogue, with its piquant voicing of letters that are normally silent, extracts from chivalry a lesson for modernity: the sacred power of the word. Language itself is the source of enchantment: the knight's white Labrador dog is a lion because he calls it one, and a vow, when kept, can work miracles. The film evokes the wonder of a country where the medieval is still recent and the landscape is thick with centuries of cultural invention. In French.—*Richard Brody* (BAM Rose Cinemas; June 10.)

THE LONGEST YARD
A brutal and sentimental would-be populist entertainment, complete with gay-bashing and a paranoid attitude toward authority. A very laid-back Adam Sandler takes on the old Burt Reynolds role (the original movie was made in 1974) of Paul Crewe, a corrupt football star who winds up in a Texas prison and organizes a disaffected bunch of cons into a team good enough to take on the guards who torment and abuse them. It's a Hollywood redemption saga, larded with bone-cracking smackdowns and jeering humor. Plenty of actual football players are on hand, as is Chris Rock, wasted in the role of a shrimp who gets by on his wits. James Cromwell narrows his eyes as the sadistic warden, and Reynolds himself drops in and says everything much too emphatically. The message is that prisoners are human, too, but this movie, which ridicules almost everybody and everything, isn't entirely trustworthy as an ethical guide. Directed by Peter Segal with remarkable crudity.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

MADAGASCAR
In DreamWorks' latest attempt at an animated blockbuster, four overcivilized animals from the Central Park Zoo get transported to the wilds of Madagascar. It's a good comic premise, and much of the animation is beautiful, but the filmmakers don't follow through on their ideas. When the kvetching New Yorkers hit the jungle, we hope to see how their peculiar urban skills will allow them to deal with the creeping and crawling terrors. A few cobwebs cling to them, but the chief menace, the Foosas—nasty, hyena-like creatures—turns out to be a bunch of pussycats. Great visuals, lousy plot. With Ben Stiller as Alex the lion, Chris Rock as Marty, a zebra who horses around too much, David Schwimmer as a hypochondriacal giraffe, and Jada Pinkett Smith as a commonsensical hippo. Directed by Eric Darnell and Tom McGrath.—*D.D.* (5/30/05) (In wide release.)

MAD HOT BALLROOM
Marilyn Agrelo's documentary follows three competing groups of fifth graders as they learn the music and the steps of swing, the rumba, the tango, and other ballroom dances. A picture of New York kid culture (Dominican students from Washington Heights, upscale kids from Tribeca, Italians and Asians from Bensonhurst), the film focusses not only on the buoyant work of the contestants but also on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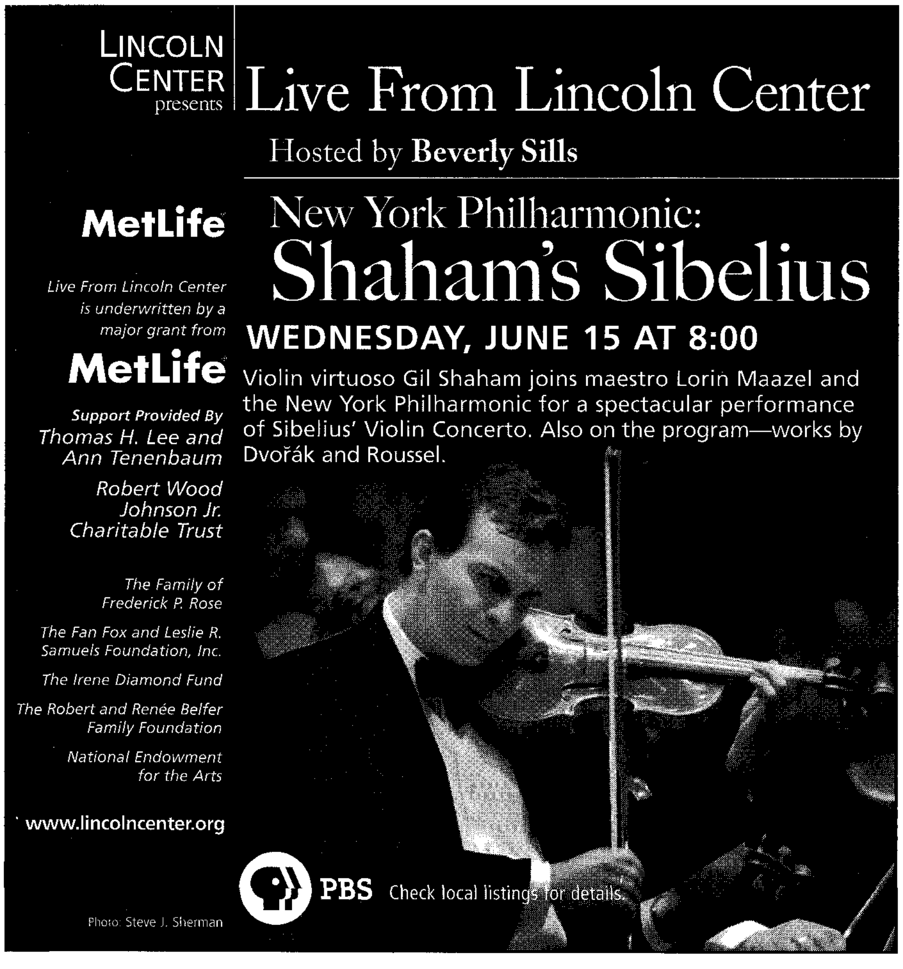
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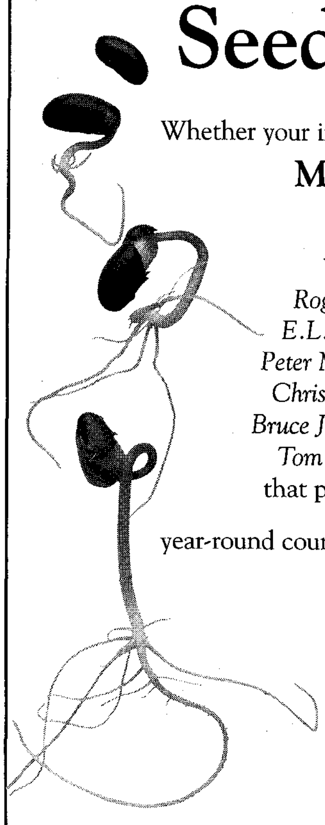

their dedicated teachers. Agrelo's filmmaking provides telling glimpses of the students' home lives, and she avoids any cloying sentiment. What she captures is a moving, joyous childhood escapade.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

MONSTER-IN-LAW
In this comedy set in L.A., the heroine, Charlie (Jennifer Lopez), falls in love with a dreamboat (Michael Vartan) and has to do battle with his drunkenly possessive mother, played by the great Jane Fonda, who, in a misguided "comeback," gives a performance so strenuous that it's almost unwatchable. O.K., it's silly to get upset. "Monster-in-Law" is just a commercial product, as squarely aimed at teen-age girls as an advertisement for pink cell phones. Still, the self-confident fatuity and condescension of the entire show are offensive. The two lovers don't have an idea, an opinion, a trace of wit—all they want to do is cuddle and disappear into the petunias-and-roses California kitsch. Written by Anya Kochoff and directed by Robert Luketic.—*D.D.* (5/16/05) (In wide release.)

THE SISTERHOOD OF THE TRAVELING PANTS
After their high-school graduation, four seventeen-year-old girls find a pair of magic pants that miraculously fits them all. Adapted from a best-selling young-adult novel by Ann Brashares, the movie is an engaging and effective melodrama. The young women live through real problems—buried anger toward a divorced father, the hole left by a mother's suicide, an angry rebel's failure to connect—and the four actresses (Amber Tamblyn, Alexis Bledel, America Ferrera, and Blake Lively) infuse them with moments of real emotion. The stories themselves, however, follow a connect-the-dots map from screenwriting class, and the film excludes all real-world context and is implausibly clean—there's no drinking or drugs, and the only sex is a subject of regret. The film lacks lively, invigorating vulgarity; it is the sanitized inverse to the hedonism of music-video culture, equally unreal and equally reductive.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

STAR WARS—EPISODE III: REVENGE OF THE SITH
That's all, folks. After five front-line reports from a galaxy far, far away, George Lucas has come to the end of his tale—or, rather, gone back to where he began. For devotees, it will signal a fond and snuffling farewell, as they bid adieu to a vast parade of clones, Ewoks, Darths, tragic hair styles, noble knights, and strangely fastidious androids. For the rest of us, there will be nothing but inexpressible relief. It is true that this sixth film marks an improvement upon the last two efforts, whose combined soullessness was enough to induce paralysis, but Lucas remains wedded to a hollow, antiseptic vision of other worlds, coupled with a determination to draw the glummest possible performance from otherwise talented actors. Hayden Christensen plays Anakin Skywalker, who is increasingly lured toward what he calls the dark side and what the rest of us would call frowning. Aiding him is the corrupt Palpatine (Ian McDiarmid), the Chancellor of the Republic, while those trying to thwart our hero's crossover include his pregnant wife (Natalie Portman) and, of course, Obi-Wan Kenobi (Ewan McGregor), who is himself thwarted by an unspeakable British accent. There are frantic duels, murderous dialogue, and a final, fetishistic transformation of trashed Jedi into evil lord, but the suspicion remains that Lucas has left deep space a far shallower place than he found it.—*A.L.* (5/23/05) (In wide release.)

UNLEASHED
Jet Li gets to exercise his acting chops along with his impeccable martial-arts skills in this unapologetically silly action film. Li plays a mad dog of a man who's been raised from childhood to become a killer for a Glasgow gangster (played with great relish by Bob Hoskins). After Li escapes his tormentors, he's befriended by a blind musician (Morgan Freeman) who shows him a bit of kindness and a good meal. When Hoskins's gang sets out to reclaim Li, the mayhem begins. The fight scenes are choreographed by the brilliant Yuen Woo Ping ("Kill Bill," "Kung Fu Hustle"), and the director, Louis Leterrier, wisely stays out of the way of the flying furniture.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

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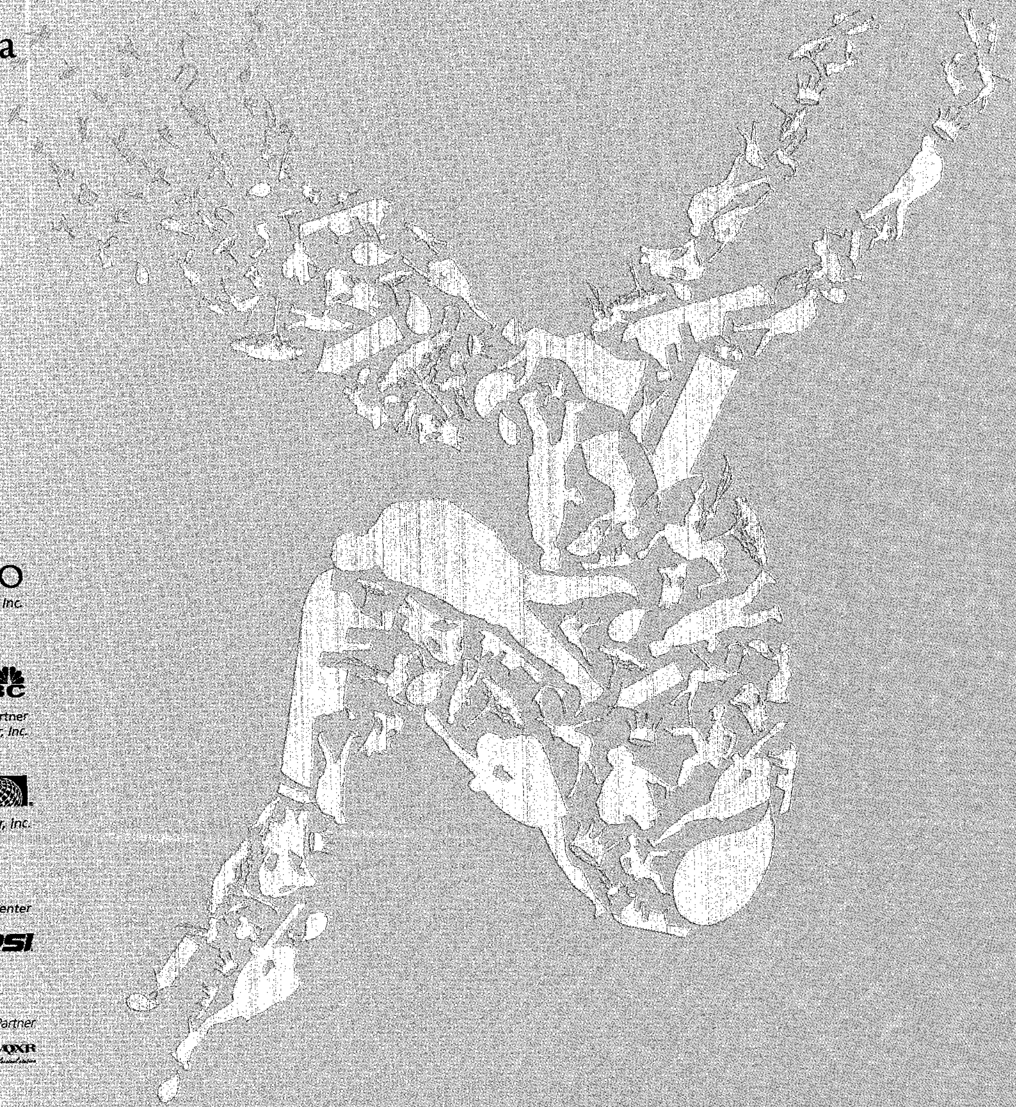

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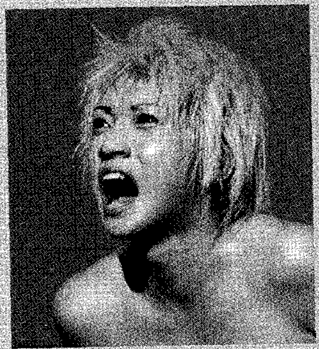

Modern Noh Plays

Ocean

Arlecchino

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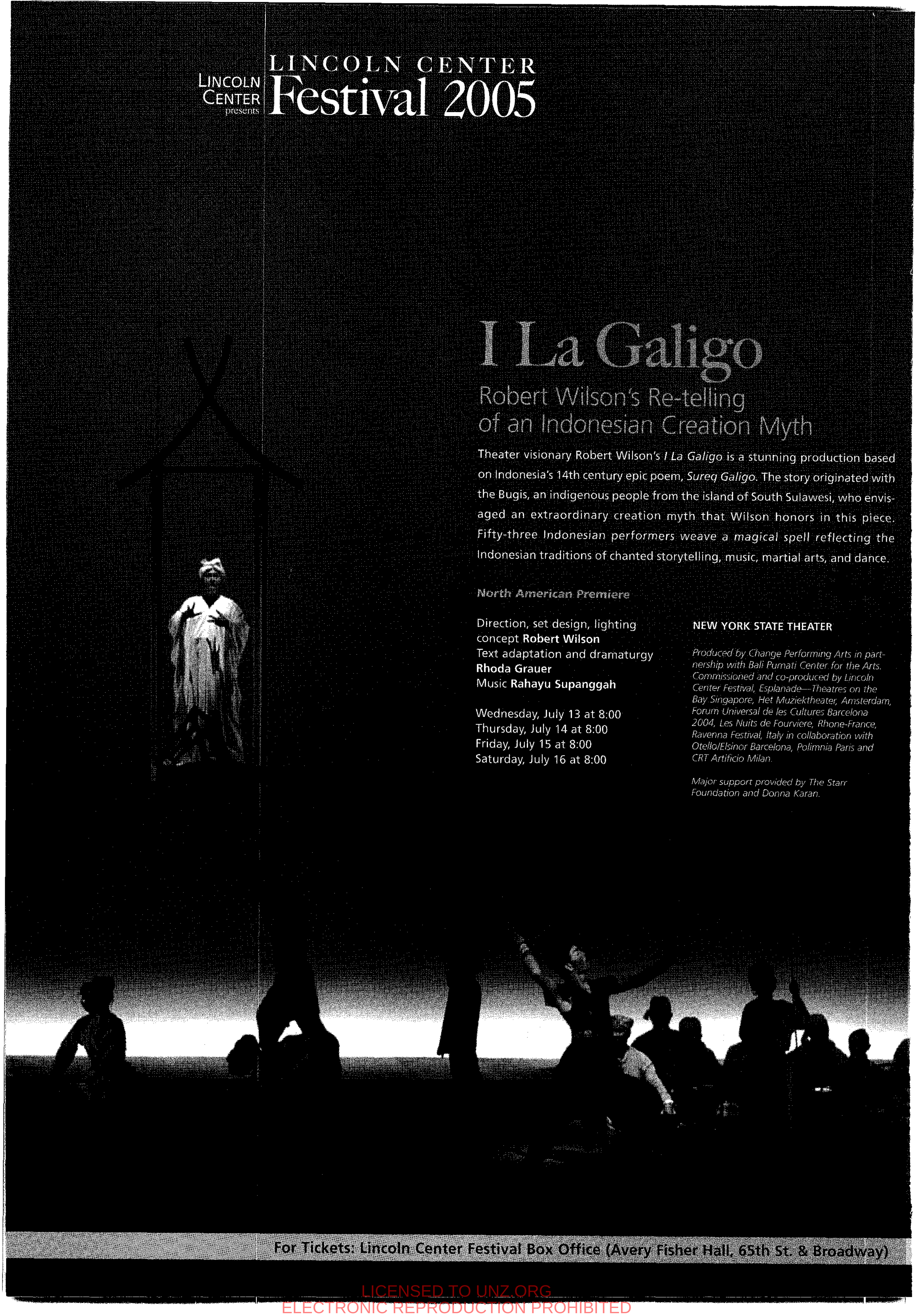


I La Galigo

Robert Wilson's Re-telling of an Indonesian Creation Myth

Theater visionary Robert Wilson's *I La Galigo* is a stunning production based on Indonesia's 14th century epic poem, *Sureq Galigo*. The story originated with the Bugis, an indigenous people from the island of South Sulawesi, who envisaged an extraordinary creation myth that Wilson honors in this piece. Fifty-three Indonesian performers weave a magical spell reflecting the Indonesian traditions of chanted storytelling, music, martial arts, and dance.

North American Premiere

Direction, set design, lighting concept **Robert Wilson**
Text adaptation and dramaturgy **Rhoda Grauer**
Music **Rahayu Supanggah**

Wednesday, July 13 at 8:00
Thursday, July 14 at 8:00
Friday, July 15 at 8:00
Saturday, July 16 at 8:00

NEW YORK STATE THEATER

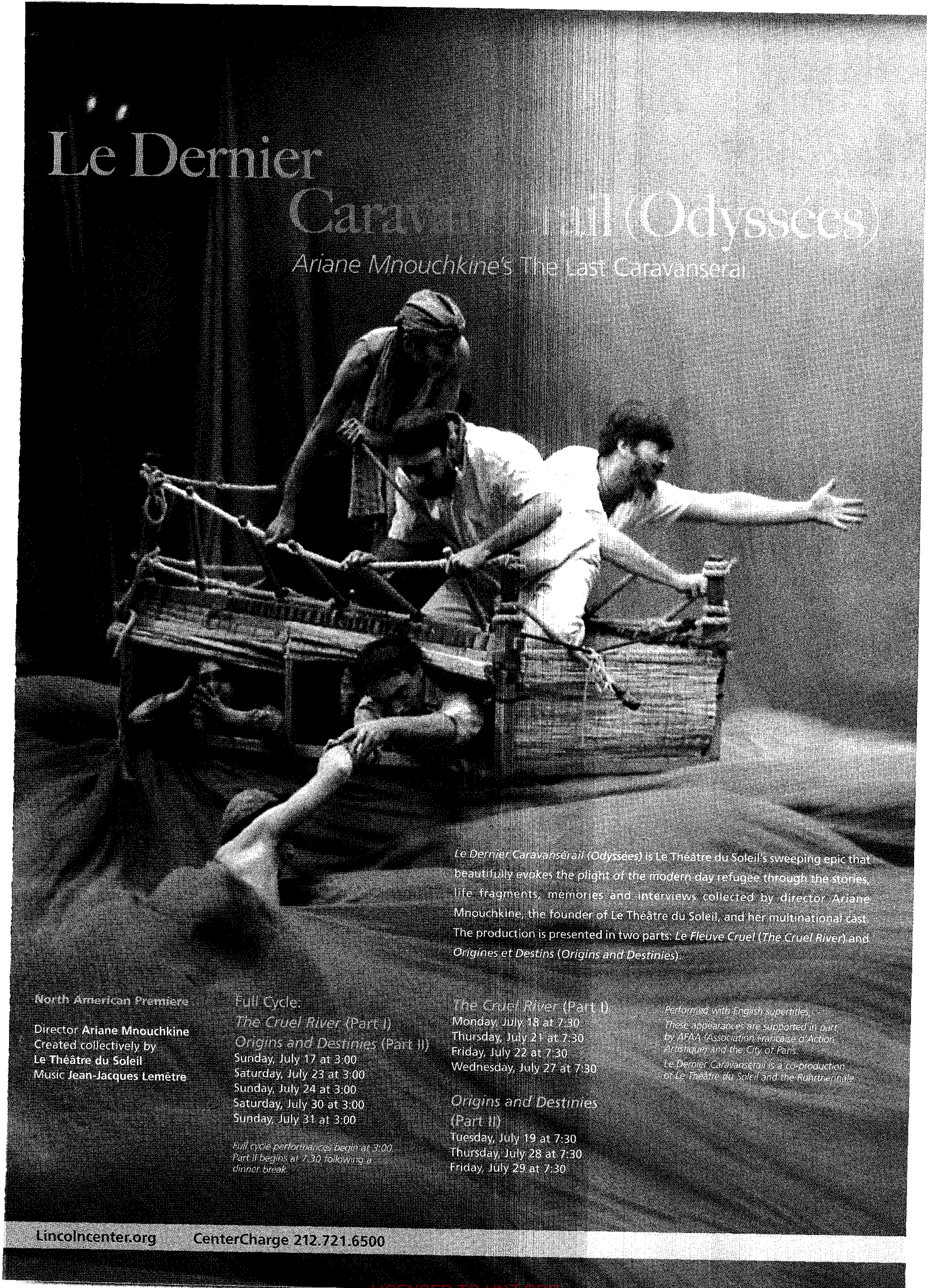
Produced by Change Performing Arts in partnership with Bali Purnati Center for the Arts. Commissioned and co-produced by Lincoln Center Festival, Esplanade—Theatres on the Bay Singapore, Het Muziektheater, Amsterdam, Forum Universal de les Cultures Barcelona 2004, Les Nuits de Fourviere, Rhone-France, Ravenna Festival, Italy in collaboration with Otello/Elsinor Barcelona, Polimnia Paris and CRT Artificio Milan.

Major support provided by The Starr Foundation and Donna Karan.

For Tickets: Lincoln Center Festival Box Office (Avery Fisher Hall, 65th St. & Broadway)

Le Dernier Caravansérail (Odyssées)

Ariane Mnouchkine's The Last Caravanserai



Le Dernier Caravansérail (Odyssées) is Le Théâtre du Soleil's sweeping epic that beautifully evokes the plight of the modern day refugee through the stories, life fragments, memories and interviews collected by director Ariane Mnouchkine, the founder of Le Théâtre du Soleil, and her multinational cast. The production is presented in two parts: *Le Fleuve Cruel* (*The Cruel River*) and *Origines et Destins* (*Origins and Destinies*).

North American Premiere

Director **Ariane Mnouchkine**
Created collectively by
Le Théâtre du Soleil
Music **Jean-Jacques Lemêtre**

Full Cycle:
The Cruel River (Part I)
Origins and Destinies (Part II)
Sunday, July 17 at 3:00
Saturday, July 23 at 3:00
Sunday, July 24 at 3:00
Saturday, July 30 at 3:00
Sunday, July 31 at 3:00

Full cycle performances begin at 3:00. Part II begins at 7:30 following a dinner break.

The Cruel River (Part I)
Monday, July 18 at 7:30
Thursday, July 21 at 7:30
Friday, July 22 at 7:30
Wednesday, July 27 at 7:30

Origins and Destinies (Part II)
Tuesday, July 19 at 7:30
Thursday, July 28 at 7:30
Friday, July 29 at 7:30

Performed with English supertitles.

These appearances are supported in part by AFAA (Association Française d'Action Artistique) and the City of Paris.

Le Dernier Caravansérail is a co-production of Le Théâtre du Soleil and the Ruhrtriennale.

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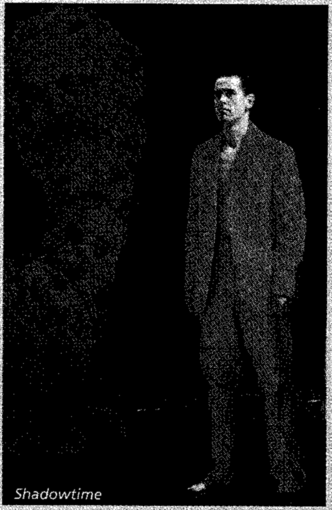
Ocean

Le Bella dormente nel bosco


Shadowtime

Jean The Terrace Part I

Dance

Merce Cunningham Dance Company

Ocean

An exotic ocean of ever-changing images conceived by two great American geniuses—Merce Cunningham and John Cage.

Tuesday, July 12 at 8:00
Wednesday, July 13 at 8:00
Thursday, July 14 at 8:00
Friday, July 15 at 8:00
Saturday, July 16 at 8:00
ROSE THEATER,
FREDERICK P. ROSE HALL

Shen Wei Dance Arts

Two mesmerizing premieres exhibiting wondrously strange dreamscapes of movement, striking in their sculptural shapes.

Tuesday, July 19 at 8:00
Saturday, July 23 at 8:00
Sunday, July 24 at 7:00
NEW YORK STATE THEATER

Random Dance

AtaXia

Wayne McGregor's fiber optic techno-multimedia dance with a radical view of human physicality.

Thursday, July 21 at 8:00
Friday, July 22 at 8:00
NEW YORK STATE THEATER

Mugiyono Kasido

Three solo dance works embracing Indonesian ritual worship, dance, and shadow play.

Monday, July 18 at 8:00
Tuesday, July 19 at 8:00
Wednesday, July 20 at 8:00
CLARK STUDIO THEATER

For complete program information call the **Info Request Line** at **212.875.5766**, or visit **Lincolncenter.org.**

Theater

Ariane Mnouchkine's

Le Dernier Caravansérail (Odyssées)

See previous page for complete program information

Giorgio Strehler's

Arlecchino, Servant of Two Masters

Italian commedia dell'arte at its best starring actor and director Ferruccio Soleri.

Wednesday, July 20 at 7:00
Thursday, July 21 at 7:00
Friday, July 22 at 7:00
Saturday, July 23 at 7:00
ALICE TULLY HALL

Yukio Ninagawa's

Modern Noh Plays

A sumptuously produced evening of spellbinding works by Yukio Mishima, featuring the Japanese stage and screen star, Tatsuya Fujiwara.

Thursday, July 28 at 8:00
Friday, July 29 at 8:00
Saturday, July 30 at 8:00
ROSE THEATER,
FREDERICK P. ROSE HALL

Music Theater

Robert Wilson's

I La Galigo

See previous page for complete program information

Chen Shi-Zheng and Stephin Merritt's

My Life As A Fairy Tale

This hallucinogenic and hypnotic new music theater piece draws upon the writings of Hans Christian Andersen, with an all-female cast including Blair Brown, Mia Maestro, Mary Lou Rosato, Qian Yi, and Fiona Shaw.

Wednesday, July 27 at 8:00
Friday, July 29 at 8:00
Saturday, July 30 at 8:00
GERALD W. LYNCH THEATER
AT JOHN JAY COLLEGE

Opera

Basil Twist's

La bella dormente nel bosco

Basil Twist's magical recreation of the classic *Sleeping Beauty* fairy tale.

Tuesday, July 12 at 8:00
Wednesday, July 13 at 8:00
Thursday, July 14 at 8:00
Friday, July 15 at 8:00
Saturday, July 16 at 2:00 & 8:00
GERALD W. LYNCH THEATER
AT JOHN JAY COLLEGE

Brian Ferneyhough and Charles Bernstein's

Shadowtime

High concept and high jinks combine in this impressionistic piece based on the life of Brian Ferneyhough.

Thursday, July 21 at 8:00
Friday, July 22 at 8:00
ROSE THEATER,
FREDERICK P. ROSE HALL

Music

America↔Africa: Hip Hop's Journey from the Terra to the Streets

Wyclef Jean and Daara J ignite the power, freshness, and urgency of this resonant art form.

Thursday, July 14 at 8:00
AVERY FISHER HALL

Rahayu Supanggah in Concert

Sounds of the Beginning

Traditional Indonesian music and experimental sounds by musicians and vocalists from the Indonesian archipelago.

Sunday, July 17 at 7:00
CLARK STUDIO THEATER

Icebreaker

Solo concert debut of this shockingly original British music ensemble.

Saturday, July 23 at 9:00
THE ALLEN ROOM,
FREDERICK P. ROSE HALL

Alarm Will Sound

Unremixed

The versatile new music band takes on twisted techno master Aphex Twin.

Sunday, July 24 at 9:00
THE ALLEN ROOM,
FREDERICK P. ROSE HALL

The Music of Brian Ferneyhough New Juilliard Ensemble

Shadowtime composer Brian Ferneyhough gets further examination in this evening of chamber music.

Monday, July 18 at 8:00
PAUL HALL AT THE JUILLIARD SCHOOL
Free admission. No tickets required.

Photos: Wyclef Jean: Anthony Cutajar; Modern Noh Plays: Seiji Egawa; Merce Cunningham Dance Company: Tony Dougherty; Piccolo Teatro di Milano: Luigi Ciminaghi; I La Galigo: Ken Cheong/Ung Ruey Loon—Courtesy of EsplanadeSingapore; Théâtre du Soleil: Michèle Laurent; La bella dormente nel bosco: Alane Poirier; Shadowtime: Regine Koerner; Shen Wei Dance Arts: Bruce R. Feeley.

For Tickets: Lincoln Center Festival Box Office (65th St. & Broadway) • lincolncenter.org • CenterCharge 212.721.6500

THE WHITE DIAMOND
Werner Herzog, who gave us such singular tales as "Nosferatu" and "Fitzcarraldo," appears to have forsaken the fictional. These days, he dwells on documentary, although whether that is his natural field is open to debate; he seems not so much an inquirer as a bearer of visions, and, as a result, some of his accounts of life on the margins and backwaters of the world seem closer to reverie than to reportage. This new and typically unhurried work follows a British aeronautical engineer named Graham Dorrington to Guyana, where his two-man airship is tested over the roof of the rain forest. The movie traces the project to its completion, although Herzog's attention is endlessly diverted—into a cast list of local characters, toward the thunder of a nearby waterfall, and, piece by piece, into the story of an earlier Dorrington endeavor that ended in calamity. There are moments so ravishing that no other director could conjure them, yet too often the strangeness feels willed, and the drift of the film resembles that of the ship itself—tranquil, exasperating, and dangerously short of purpose.—*A.L.* (6/6/05) (Film Forum.)

Also Playing

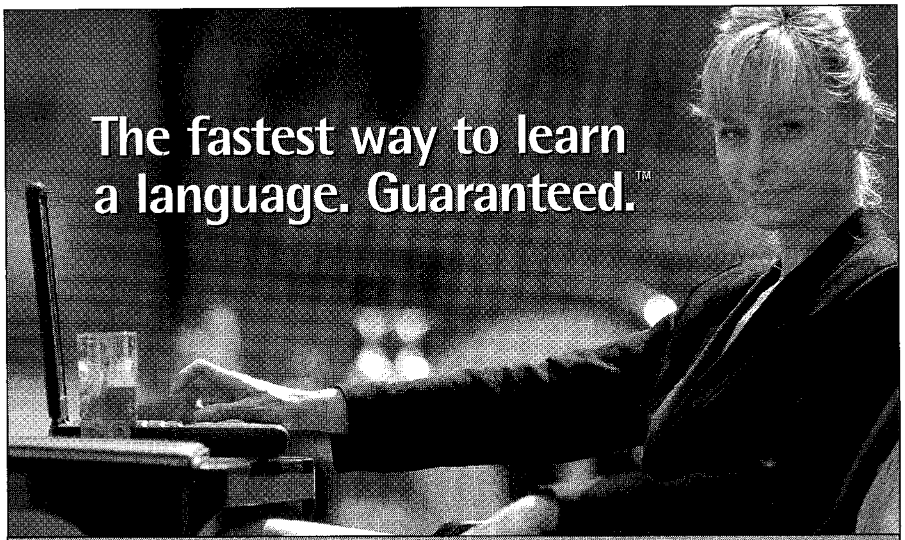
APRÈS VOUS: New York Twin and Quad Cinema. **DEEP BLUE:** Angelika Film Center. **LORDS OF DOGTOWN:** In wide release. **ROCK SCHOOL:** Lincoln Square and Village Theatre VII.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—New filmmakers. June 8 at 8: "On the Shoulder" (2005, Nadja Stokes). ♦ June 15 at 8: "The Latin Legends of Comedy" (2004, Ray Ellin). ♦ "Eye & Ear Controlled." June 8 at 8: Videos by Charlemagne Palestine (1974-77). ♦ June 9 at 8: Film collaborations by Steve Reich and Terry Riley (1963-76). ♦ June 11 at 8: "The Taj Mahal Travellers on Tour" (1971, the Taj Mahal Travellers). ♦ Highlights from the Goethe-Institut film catalogue. June 9 at 7: "I Only Want You to Love Me" (1976, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German). ♦ June 9 at 9:15: "I Don't Just Want You to Love Me" (1993, Hans Günther Pflaum; in German). ♦ Première. June 10-19 at 7 and 9:15, with additional screenings June 11-12 and June 18-19 at 2 and 4:30: "Café Lumière" (2003, Hou Hsiao-hsien; in Japanese). ♦ Special screenings. June 10 at 8: "Emma's Dilemma" (1997-2005, Henry Hills). ♦ June 12 at 7: Short films by Henry Hills (1976-99). ♦ "Vision Festival." June 11 at 2: "Mingus 1968" (1968, Thomas Reichman) and "Jackie McLean on Mars" (1976, Ken Levis). ♦ June 11 at 4: "The Cry of Jazz" (1959, Ed Bland) and "The Connection" (1961, Shirley Clarke). ♦ June 12 at 2: "David, Moffett and Ornette" (1966, Dick Fontaine) and "The City of Winds" (2003, Gilles Corre). ♦ June 12 at 4: "Rising Tones Cross" (1985, Ebba Jahn), "Vision 97" (1998, Susan Littenberg), and "2003 Vision DVD" (2005, Brian Carpenter and Michale Lucio Sternbach).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Through June 29: "*Village Voice* Best of 2004." June 9 at 7: "Dogville" (2003, Lars von Trier). ♦ June 11 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Childstar" (2004, Don McKellar). ♦ June 12 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Cowards Bend the Knee" (2003, Guy Maddin). ♦ June 13 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Son Frère" (2003, Patrice Chéreau; in French). ♦ June 14 at 7:30: "The Big Durian" (2003, Amir Muhammad; in English, Malay, and Cantonese). ♦ June 16 at 6:50 and 9:30: "The Forest for the Trees" (2003, Maren Ade; in German). ♦ June 17 at 7: "The World" (2004, Jia Zhang Ke; in Mandarin). ♦ Double feature. June 18 at 3 and 7: "Before Sunrise" (1995, Richard Linklater) and "Before Sunset" (2004, Linklater). ♦ June 19 at 3: "Star Spangled to Death" (2004, Ken Jacobs). ♦ June 20 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Good Bye, Dragon Inn" (2003, Tsai Ming-liang; in Mandarin and Taiwanese). ♦ June 21 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Ghost in the Shell 2: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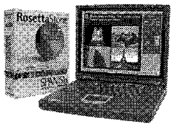

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Innocence" (2004, Mamoru Oshî; in Japanese and Cantonese). ♦ "Eugène Green: A Baroque World." June 8 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Night After Night" (2001; in French). ♦ June 10 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Living World" (†). ♦ "Cinema Tropical." June 15 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "El Leyton" (2002, Gonzalo Justiniano; in Spanish).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—June 8-9 at 1:20, 3:25, 5:30, 7:35, and 9:40: "The Two of Us" (1967, Claude Berri; in French). ♦ James Dean films. June 10-16 at 1, 3:10, 5:25, 7:40, and 9:50: "East of Eden" (1955, Elia Kazan). ♦ June 17-21 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "Rebel Without a Cause" (1955, Nicholas Ray).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"Occupation of France Series." June 14 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Love Story" (1943, Claude Autant-Lara; in French). ♦ June 21 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "The Raven" (1943, Henri-Georges Clouzot; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"To Save and Project: The Third MOMA International Festival of Film Preservation." June 8 at 5 and June 16 at 8:30: "Lilith" (1964, Robert Rossen). ♦ June 8 at 7:30: "She Didn't Say No!" (1958, Cyril Frankel). ♦ June 9 at 6:30 and June 20 at 5:30: "Shooting Stars" (1927, A. V. Bramble and Anthony Asquith; silent). ♦ June 9 at 8:30: "The Trespasser" (1929, Edmund Goulding). ♦ June 10 at 6 and June 11 at 4: Films by Mack Sennett (1914; silent). ♦ June 10 at 8: "Étienne-Jules Marey: Science and Cinema Explored" (1830-1904; silent). ♦ June 11 at 2: "Before Mickey: Early Animation Masterworks from George Eastman House" (1916-28). ♦ June 11 at 6: "The Devil's Circus" (1926, Benjamin Christensen; silent). ♦ June 11 at 8:30: "Harry and the Butler" (1961, Bent Christensen; in Danish). ♦ June 12 at 5: "Marquis d'Eon, der Spion der Pompadour" (1928, Karl Grüne; silent). ♦ June 13 at 6:30: "The Unholy Three" (1925, Tod Browning; silent). ♦ June 13 at 8:30: "The Unholy Three" (1930, Jack Conway). ♦ June 15 at 6:30 and June 18 at 2: "The Set-Up" (1949, Robert Wise). ♦ June 15 at 8:30 and June 18 at 4: "A Face in the Crowd" (1957, Elia Kazan). ♦ June 17 at 6: "Fårödokument" (1969, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). ♦ June 17 at 7:30: "Fårödokument 1979" (1979, Bergman; in Swedish). ♦ June 18 at 4: "Kaliya Mardan" (1919, Dhundiraj Govind Phalke; silent). ♦ June 18 at 6: "The New Babylon" (1929, Leonid Trauberg and Grigori Kosintsev; silent). ♦ June 18 at 6:30 and June 19 at 2: "Deadlier Than the Male" (1966, Ralph Thomas). ♦ June 18 at 8: Short films from Switzerland (1923-28; silent). ♦ June 18 at 8:30: "Witchfinder General" (1968, Michael Reeves). ♦ June 19 at 5 and June 20 at 6: "Amarcord" (1973, Federico Fellini; in Italian). ♦ June 20 at 7:30: "L'Atlantide" (1920, Jacques Feyder; silent). ♦ "112 Years of Cinema." June 8 at 5:30: "Hannah and Her Sisters" (1986, Woody Allen). ♦ June 19 at 5:15: "Xiao Wu" (1997, Jia Zhang Ke; in Mandarin). ♦ "Miramax: 25 Years." June 8 at 7:15: "Sling Blade" (1996, Billy Bob Thornton). ♦ June 16 at 6: "The Piano" (1993, Jane Campion). ♦ The films of Hanna Schygulla. June 9 at 8: A conversation with and a musical performance by Hanna Schygulla. ♦ June 10 at 6: "A Love in Germany" (1983, Andrzej Wajda; in Polish). ♦ June 10 at 8:15 and June 15 at 6: "The Marriage of Maria Braun" (1979, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German). ♦ June 11 at 2 and June 13 at 6: "Sheer Madness" (1983, Margarethe von Trotta; in German). ♦ June 11 at 4:15: "The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant" (1972, Fassbinder; in German). ♦ June 11 at 6:45: "Passion" (1982, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). ♦ June 11 at 8:45: "La Nuit de Varennes" (1982, Ettore Scola; in French and Italian). ♦ June 12 at 2: "Lili Marleen" (1981, Fassbinder; in German). ♦ June 12 at 4:30 and June 15 at 8:15: "Effi Briest" (1974, Fassbinder; in German). ♦ June 13 at 8:15: "The Story of Piera" (1983, Marco Ferreri; in Italian). ♦ "Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata: Masters of Animation." June 16 at 7: "Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind" (1984, Miyazaki). ♦ June 17 at 7: "Princess Mononoke" (1997, Miyazaki). ♦ June 19 at 1: "Heidi: A Girl of the Alps" (1974, Takahata; in Japanese). ♦ June 19 at 2:45: "Spirited Away" (2001, Miyazaki). ♦ North American première. June 20 at 8:30: "Mon Oncle" (1958, Jacques Tati; in French).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Cinema Tropical." June 10 at 7:30: "El Leyton" (2002, Gonzalo Justiniano; in Spanish). ♦ "Asian City Films." June 11 at 1:30: "Unknown Pleasures" (2002, Jia Zhang Ke; in Mandarin). ♦ June 11 at 4: "The World" (2004, Zhang Ke; in Mandarin). ♦ June 12 at 2: "Fallen Angels" (1995, Wong Kar-wai; in Cantonese). ♦ June 12 at 4: "Millennium Mambo" (2001, Hou Hsiao-hsien; in Mandarin). ♦ June 19 at 2: "Vive l'Amour" (1994, Tsai Ming-liang; in Mandarin). ♦ June 19 at 4:30: "The Missing" (2003, Lee Kang-sheng; in Mandarin). ♦ Repertory nights. June 11-12 at 6:30: "Juliet of the Spirits" (1965, Federico Fellini; in Italian). ♦ June 18-19 at 6:30: "Marnie" (1964, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ "Black Light: Films from the African Diaspora." June 17 at 7:30: "Ganja & Hess" (1973, Bill Gunn and Fima Noveck). ♦ Special screening. June 18 at 2 and 4: "Gumby: The Movie" (1995, Art Clokey).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. June 10-11: "Brazil" (†). ♦ June 17-18: "Ghostbusters" (1984, Ivan Reitman).

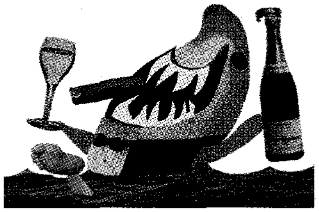
THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—June 19 at 4 and June 21 at 8:15: "Downfall" (2004, Oliver Hirschbiegel; in German). ♦ June 19 at 7: "La Strada" (1954, Federico Fellini; in Italian). ♦ June 21 at 6: "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg" (1964, Jacques Demy; in French).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—New Italian films. All films are in Italian. June 8 at 2: "Cefalonia" (2005, Riccardo Milani). ♦ June 8 at 4:40: "Love Me" (2004, Renato De Maria). ♦ June 8 at 6:30: "Radio Alice" (2004, Guido Chiesa). ♦ June 8 at 8:45: "I Truly Respect You" (2004, Eugenio Cappuccio). ♦ June 9 at 1: "Changing Destiny" (2004, Daniele Gaglianone). ♦ June 9 at 3:15: "The Remains of Nothing" (2004, Antonietta de Lillo). ♦ Through June 23: The Human Rights Watch International Film Festival. June 10 at 2, June 11 and June 15 at 4, and June 13 at 9: "The Liberace of Baghdad" (2004, Sean McAllister). ♦ June 10 at 4 and June 12 at 9:30: "Midwinter Night's Dream" (2004, Goran Paskaljevic; in Serbo-Croatian). ♦ June 10 at 6:30, June 12 at 4:15, and June 14 at 1: "State of Fear" (2005, Pamela Yates, Paco de Onís, and Peter Kinoy; in English and Spanish). ♦ June 10 at 9, June 11 at 6:15, and June 13 at 4:15: "Omagh" (2004, Pete Travis). ♦ June 11 at 1 and June 12 at 6:45: "Wall" (2004, Simone Bitton; in Hebrew and Arabic). ♦ June 11 at 9, June 13 at 6:30, and June 16 at 1: "Una de Dos" (2004, Alejo Hernán Taube; in Spanish). ♦ June 12-13 at 1 and June 14 at 8:30: "Mardi Gras: Made in China" (2004, David Redmon) and "Seoul Train" (2004, Jim Butterworth, Aaron Lubarsky, and Lisa Sleeth; in Korean, Mandarin, Polish, and English). ♦ June 14 at 3:30 and June 15 and June 17 at 6:15: "Occupation: Dreamland" (2005, Garrett Scott and Ian Olds; in English and Arabic). ♦ June 14 and June 19 at 6 and June 17 at 1: "The Education of Shelby Knox" (2005, Marion Lipschutz and Rose Rosenblatt). ♦ June 15 at 1, June 16 at 9, and June 18 at 6:15: "No More Tears Sister: Anatomy of Hope and Betrayal" (2004, Helene Klodawsky). ♦ June 16 at 3:30, June 17 at 8:45, and June 19 at 8:30: "Compadre" (2004, Mikael Wiström; in Spanish). ♦ June 17 at 3:30, June 18 at 1, and June 20 at 6:15: "Living Rights" (2004, Duco Tellegen; in Japanese, Maasai, and Russian). ♦ June 18 at 3:30 and June 21 at 8:30: "Justice" (2004, Maria Ramos; in Portuguese). ♦ June 18 at 8:45 and June 20 at 1: "La Sierra" (2004, Scott Dalton and Margarita Martinez; in Spanish). ♦ June 19 at 1, June 20 at 3:30, and June 21 at 6:15: "Videoletters: Group 1" (2004-05, Katarina Rejger and Eric van den Broek; in Albanian, Bosnian, Croatian, Macedonian, Serbian, and Slovenian). ♦ June 19 at 3:30 and June 21 at 4: "Videoletters: Group 2" (2004-5; Rejger and van den Broek). ♦ June 20 at 8:30 and June 21 at 2: "Pulled from the Rubble" (2004, Margaret Loescher).

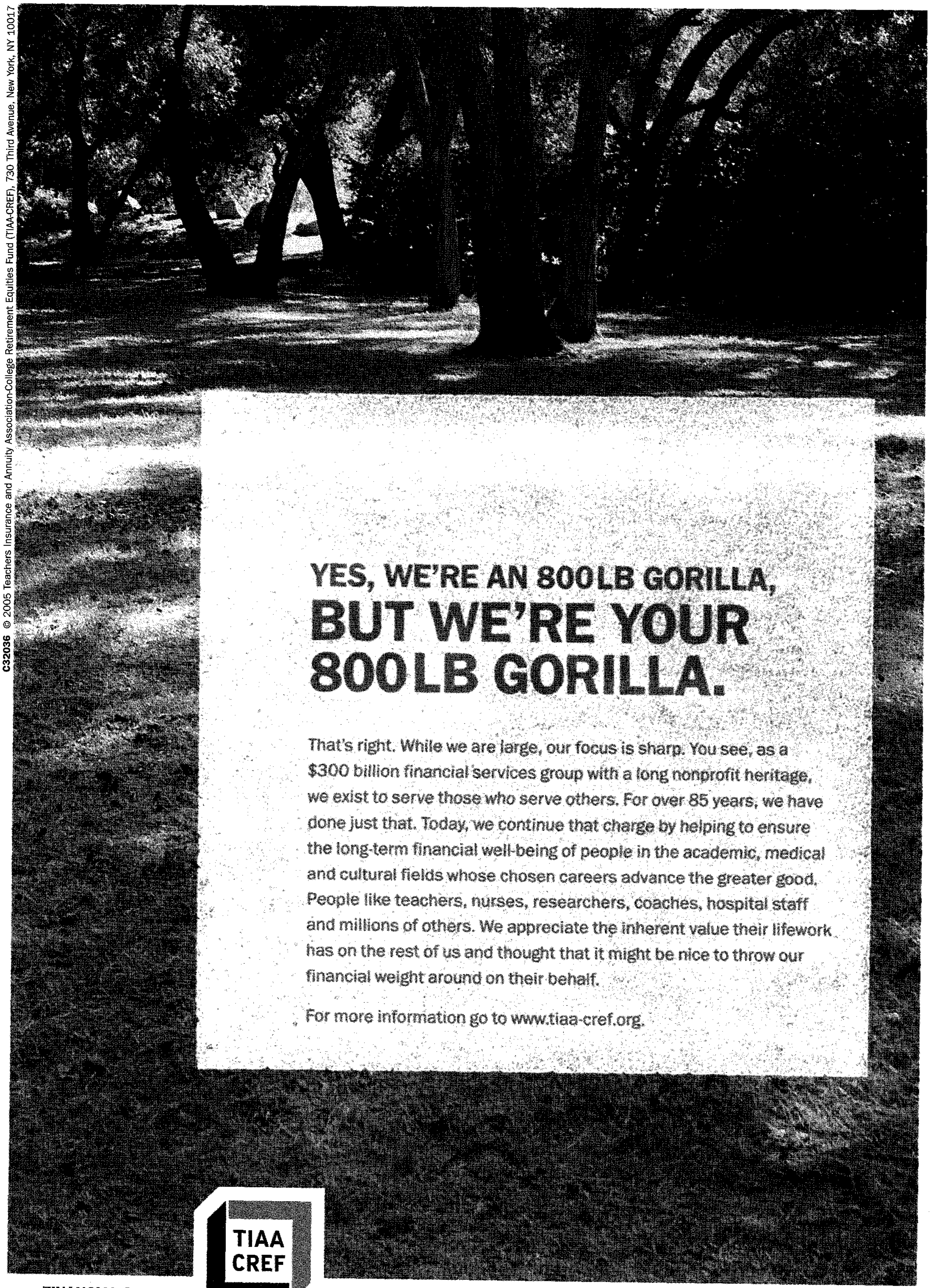
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
ONCE BITTEN



STEPHEN KRONINGER

Steven Spielberg's "Jaws" begins as a kind of sunshine-bright horror movie: ordinary people motivated by greed and pleasure are shocked into understanding that the murderous uncanny has arrived in their midst. Then it becomes an extravagant descendant of nineteenth-century seafaring tales: rage and obsession unleash a maelstrom of violence. This summer, "Jaws" is thirty years old, and it's being reissued on DVD in a special anniversary edition, with more than two hours of interviews and outtakes. What's important about this release, however, is not what's new but what is old. Long cited as the movie that changed Hollywood into a sensation-bound blockbuster factory, "Jaws" now seems a sea-weathered example of such pre-digital filmmaking virtues as construction, suspense, and characterization; it is often blackly funny and surprisingly malicious in parts (the early attack on a naked girl, for example, shot from the point of view of the shark). Spielberg may be the man who created the new Hollywood, but in his first megahit he summed up what was best in the old—the humor, the perversity, and the storytelling integrity of Alfred Hitchcock.

—*David Denby*



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READINGS AND TALKS

WARD SUTTON
The political cartoonist discusses his latest collection, "Sutton Impact." (McNally Robinson Booksellers, 50 Prince St. No tickets necessary. June 9 at 7.)

"SEX SCENES"
Mason Pettit, Karen Grenke, Phyllis Johnson, Sarah Kozinn, and other actors read stories about lust, ambition, desperation, and sex by Polly Frost, whose humor pieces have appeared in this magazine. (Cornelia Street Café, 29 Cornelia St. 212-989-9319. June 12 at 6.)

JEREMY SCHAAP
The sportscaster reads from "Cinderella Man," his account of the Depression-era boxer James J. Braddock, which has recently appeared on the big screen under the same name. (The Half King, 505 W. 23rd St. No tickets necessary. June 13 at 7.)

"FANTASTIC FICTION"
The science-fiction writers Gregory Frost, author of "Attack of the Jazz Giants and Other Stories," and Jeffrey Ford, whose novels include "The Portrait of Mrs. Charbuque," offer selections from their work. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary. June 15 at 7.)

"OPEN CITY PRESENTS"
The literary journal and book publisher brings together one of its founding editors, Thomas Beller (author of "The Sleep-Over Artist"), and the fiction writers Scott Smith ("A Simple Plan") and Rachel Sherman, whose work appears in the new issue. The one-man band Miighty Flashlight will also perform. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. June 15 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"LITERARY UPSTART"
The "American Idol"-like short-story reading competition, in which aspiring writers are judged by a panel of literary-world insiders, wraps up its spring season with a twist. Actors from the Jean Cocteau Repertory Theatre will read and perform the finalists' work. The judges, as always, include Ben Greenman, an editor at this magazine, and Rebecca Schuman, a columnist for *The L Magazine*, the event's sponsor. (The Baggot Inn, 82 W. 3rd St. June 10 at 8. For more information and to read the stories under consideration, visit www.thelmagazine.com.)

MOCCA ART FESTIVAL
The Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art, a three-and-a-half-year-old institution in SoHo, decamps to the Puck Building for two days, where hundreds of artists will display everything from graphic novels and comic books to preliminary sketches and original art work. Top practitioners, including Adrian Tomine, Daniel Clowes, Jessica Abel, and Neal Adams, will also be on hand. (293 Lafayette St. June 11-12. For more information, visit www.moccany.org.)

"BLOOMSDAY ON BROADWAY"
This year, Symphony Space's annual reading from Joyce's "Ulysses" features Stephen Colbert, of "The Daily Show," as Leopold Bloom. Thirty-four actresses will play Molly (one for each year of her life); Terry Donnelly, who read the part twenty-four years ago at the first "Bloomsday on Broadway" event, will end the show with the "yes I said yes I will Yes" monologue. (Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. June 16 from 7 to past midnight. The program will also be broadcast live on WBAI, 99.5 FM.)

SUMMER SOLSTICE
The longest day of the year finds the Main Squeeze Orchestra, the city's only all-female, all-accordion band, and Mama Donna, a self-described urban shaman, performing music and various seasonally appropriate rituals at the Socrates Sculpture Park. (Broadway and Vernon Blvd., Long Island City, Queens. For more information, visit www.socratessculpturepark.org. June 21, starting at 5.) ♦ That evening, the historic schooner Pioneer departs the South Street Seaport at 7:30 for a twilight sail. (For reservations, call 212-748-8786.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
The sale of the original 1919 "memorandum of agreement" that legally transferred Babe Ruth from the Red Sox to the Yankees—allegedly triggering the eighty-four-year Curse of the Bambino—should provide a boost to **Sotheby's** spring season; the legendary contract leads the house's sale of sports memorabilia on June 10. A sale of books and manuscripts (including Americana) on June 16 closes with the offering of two original drafts of the Balfour Declaration, a document whose historical impact is beyond question. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ With its abstract, elongated features and serene, otherworldly appearance, the Schuster "Stargazer" (one of the finest of the fifteen known examples) could be mistaken for a lost sculpture by Brancusi or Modigliani. But this small marble female idol—the top lot in **Christie's** antiquities sale on June 8—was carved in Anatolia nearly five thousand years ago. Sales of decorative art works and design from the twentieth century and works from the Tiffany Studios (including a "Laburnum" leaded-glass-and-bronze table lamp circa 1910) will be held the next day; a sale of Americana follows on June 21. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

JEREMY TRAUM

ON THE HORIZON

NIGHT LIFE
PINK MARTINI
June 29

The Portland, Oregon-based mini-orchestra, led by the classically trained pianist Thomas M. Lauderdale, may play around the world—they have appeared at Cannes with Sharon Stone and at the grand opening of Frank Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles—but they rarely appear in New York. This concert at Summerstage, in which they open for David Byrne, will benefit the series. (212-307-7171.)

ART
WHITMAN'S AMERICA
July 1-Dec. 1

"Walt Whitman and the Promise of Democracy," at the South Street Seaport Museum, pays tribute to New York's most famous poet with a time line, photographs, a first edition, and artifacts that honor the hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the publication of "Leaves of Grass." (212-748-8600.)

MOVIES
BERGMAN'S BACK
July 8

Ingmar Bergman has directed more than sixty films, and he's still working at the age of eighty-six. On July 8, Film Forum will première his latest, "Saraband," with Liv Ullmann and Erland Josephson reprising their roles from the 1973 film "Scenes from a Marriage" as an on-again-off-again couple, now reuniting for the first time in three decades. (212-727-8110.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
WAGNER EVENING
July 16

Opera in concert is a long tradition at Tanglewood, but this summer brings the added lustre of the Boston Symphony's new music director, James Levine, who invites several Met singers (such as Deborah Voigt and Lyubov Petrova) for a Wagner evening—Act I of "Die Walküre" and Act III of "Götterdämmerung." (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND
OUT OF DOORS
Aug. 13-Sept. 4

As the Lincoln Center Out of Doors festival approaches middle age (it's turning thirty-five), it remains as youth-oriented as ever, with dance and drum workshops and a giant puppet pageant. (212-875-5766.)

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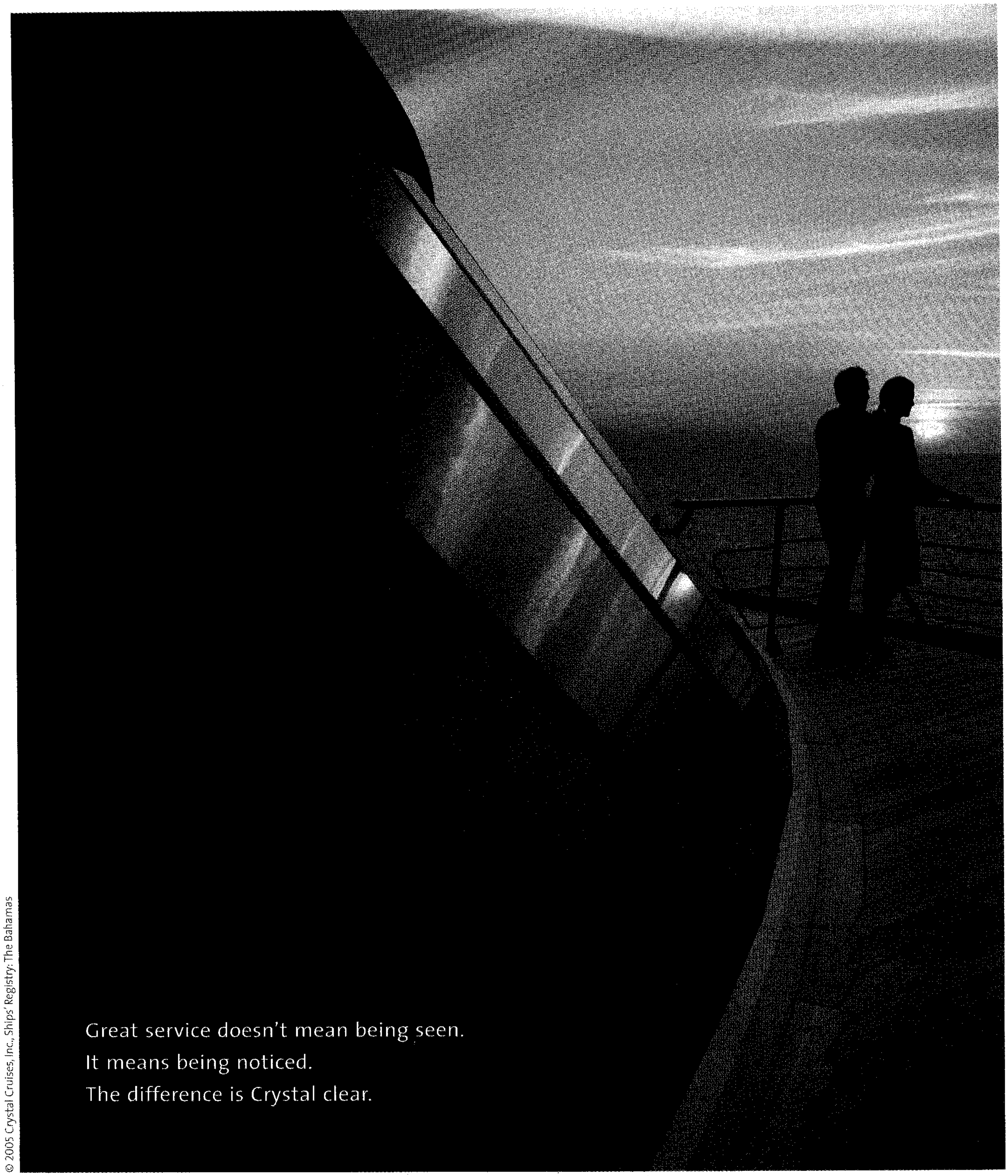
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CRYSTAL CRUISES

TRAMPING THE KIWI TRAILS

New Zealand is renowned for its eight Great Walks, most of which are located on the South Island. All told, there are about 150 trails throughout the country, which visitors can "tramp"—Kiwi for trekking. Dominated by mountains, hills, caves, lakes, and rivers within thirteen national parks, the walks cover more than eleven thousand square miles. Additionally there are twenty conservation parks, another thirty-five hundred reserves, and more than a dozen marine reserves in all.

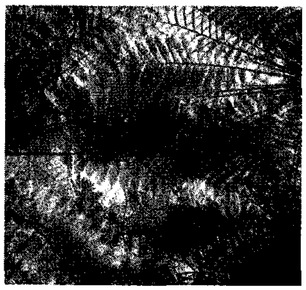
The thirty-four mile **Milford Track** in South Land's Fiordland, New Zealand's largest national park, is a UNESCO World Heritage site. This four-day trek with waterfalls and river valleys are among its natural attributes, as well as historic paths laid out by Maori.

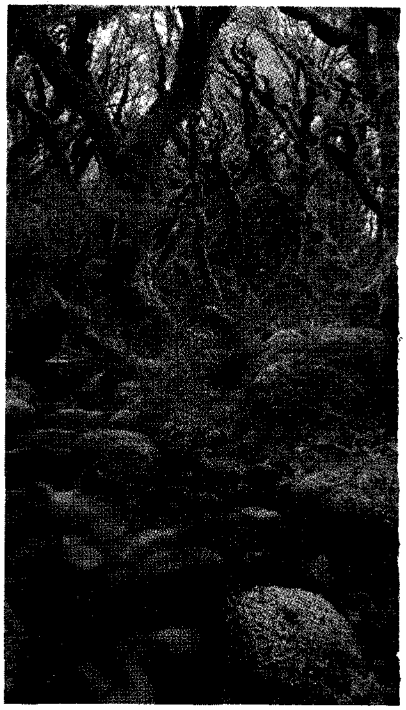
The **Abel Tasman Coastal Track** is an easier, thirty-one mile, three-day trek that hugs Fiordland's bays and beaches in the north of New Zealand's South Island. (Estuaries are accessible during low tide; take a water taxi back.)

An average-to-difficult three-day, twenty-four-mile stretch, known as the **Routeburn Track** in South Island, has some of the most scenic diversity of the tracks—subalpine flora and waterfalls abound.

One of the newest trails is the **Kepler Track,** which begins and ends at the Fiordland's visitors center and takes about four days to complete. The tramp traverses mountaintops above the bush, and includes Lake Te Anau's beech tree forest as well as open grasslands.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TOURISM NEW ZEALAND





New Zealand's least populated and southernmost **Stewart Island** was named *Rakiura* (Glowing Skies) by the Maori for the crimson sunrises for which it's known. A tramper and ornithologist's paradise, Rakiura is a three-day circular walk with gentle gradients.

South Island's **Heapy Track** in Kahurangi National Park, is a relatively undemanding, four- to six-day, fifty-mile trail that crosses the park's rugged wilderness of natural arches, sinkholes, caves, and a verdant coastal forest.

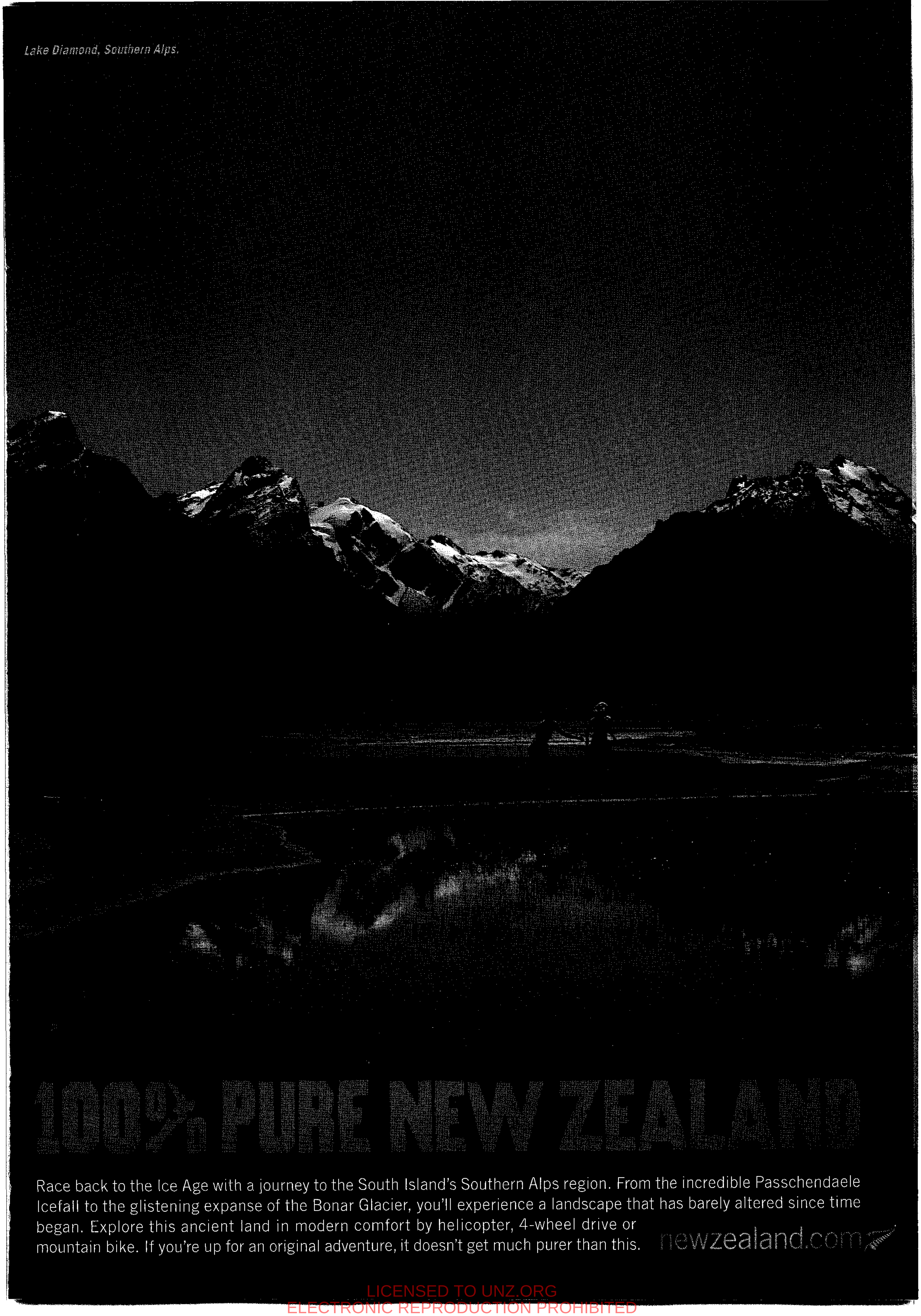
Two great North Island walks—**Tongariro Northern Circuit** (three-and-a-half days) and **Lake Waikaremoana** (about five days)—are popular tramps. The circuit provided "Lord of the Rings'" director Peter Jackson with the setting for Mordor with its lava formations, mineral lakes, and geysers. The lake track includes a one-day climb to the Panekiri bluff; the rest of the walk, rated easier, wends through fern groves and a podocarp forest, where lake views are breathtaking.

Check in with the Department of Conservation, whose Maori name is *Te Papa Atawhai* or repository of treasures, for the requisite Great Walks Pass, information on the popular and lesser-known tracks, as well as the latest on New Zealand's superb network of back-country huts available; greatwalksbooking@doc.govt.nz.

DAY TRIPPING

The New Zealand Heritage trails are self-drive, cycling, horseback riding, or tramping roads and trails that offer the chance to meet native New Zealanders and explore the places, events, and history of the country—from urban centers to the rural areas. Look for distinctive teal and yellow signage; heritagetrails.org.nz for details. CITY WALKS. *Auckland, Christchurch, Wellington, Dunedin, and other cities all have easily accessible "KiwiWalks." The convenient series of free bush and beach walks are maintained for scenic family strolls and jogs.*

GO TO NEWZEALAND.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION. *TOITU TE WHENUA.* (CARE FOR THE LAND.)



Lake Diamond, Southern Alps.

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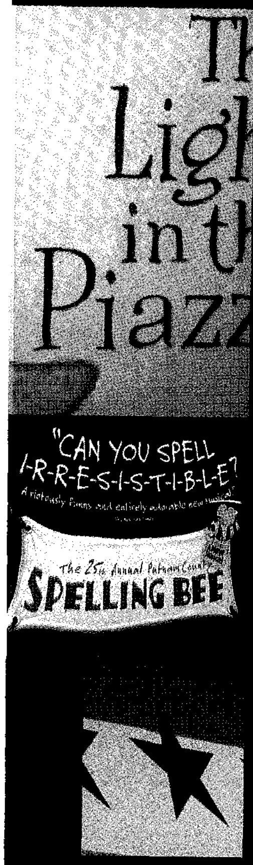
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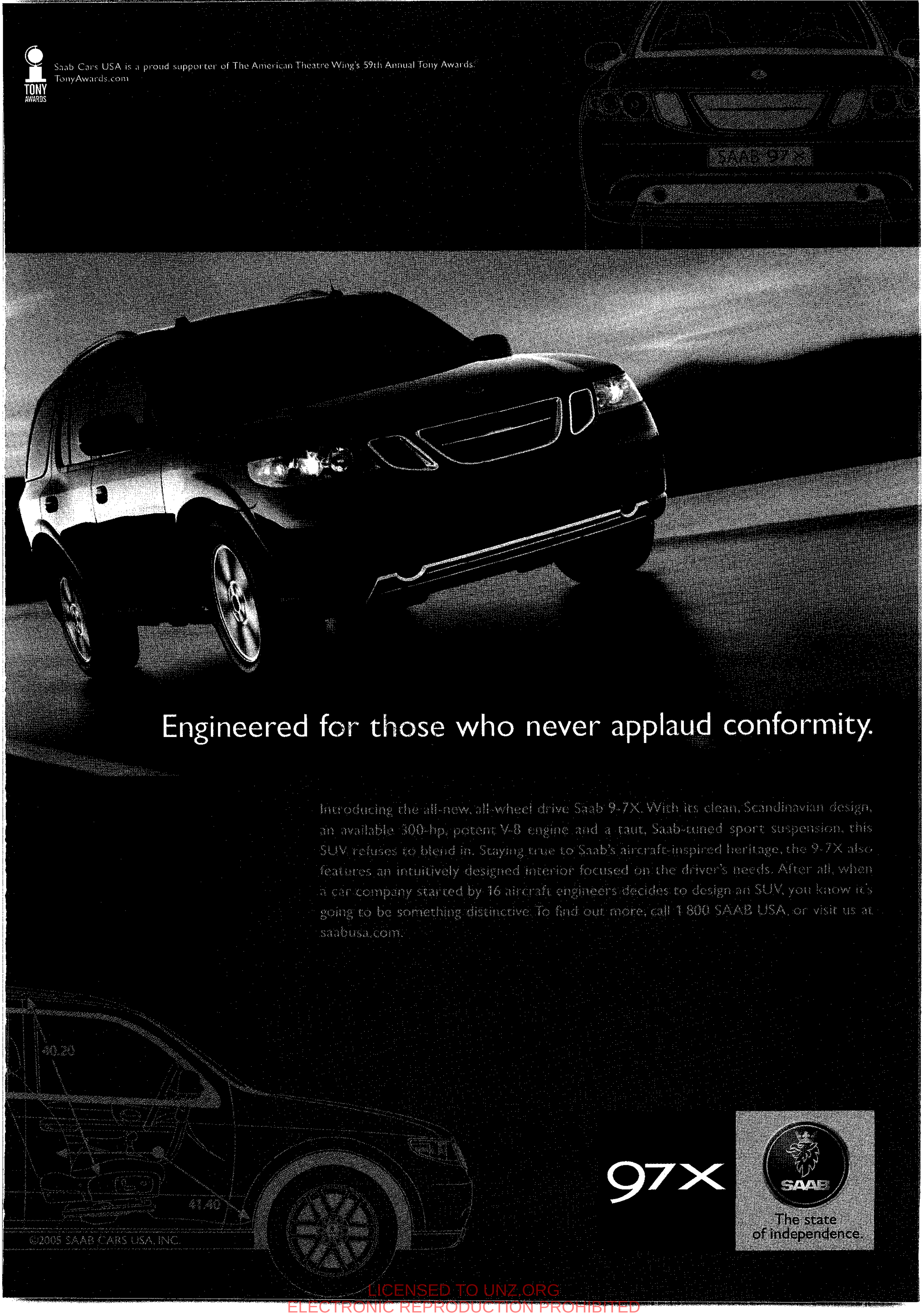
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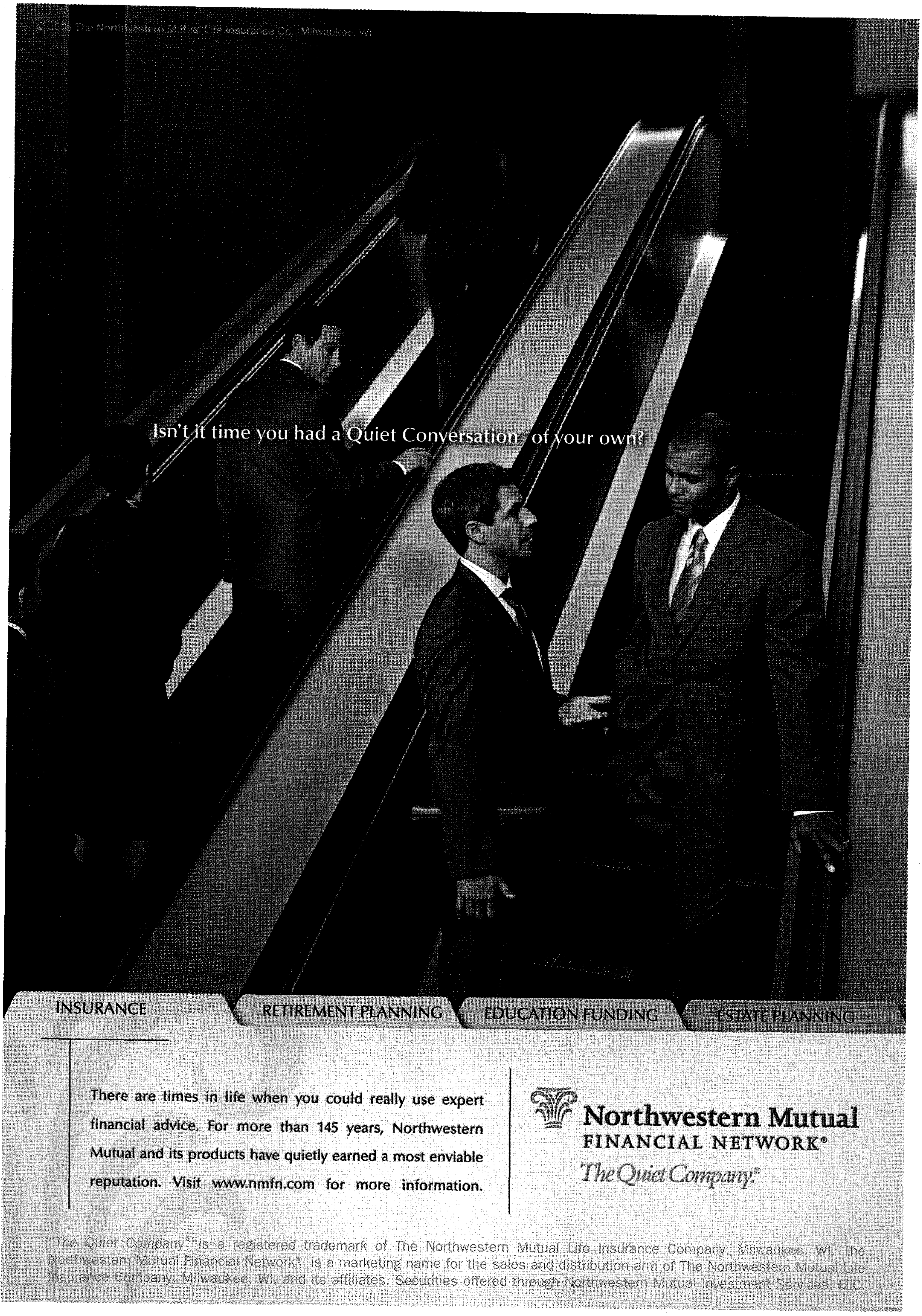
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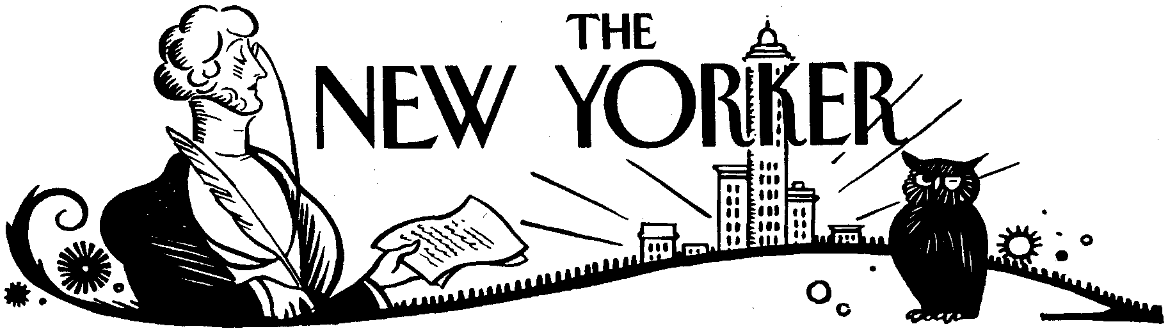
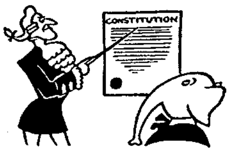


THE TALK OF THE TOWN

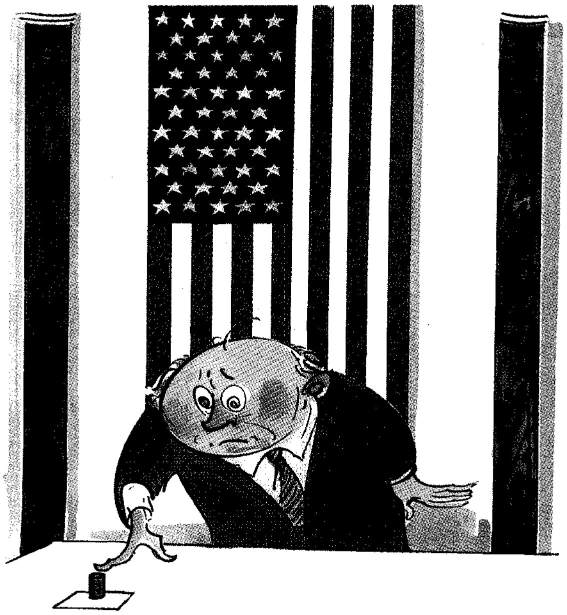
COMMENT
FILIBLUSTER



The battle in the United States Senate over judicial filibusters has been a field day for martial metaphors (such as "field day," an eighteenth-century term for a day of military exercises). On May 23rd, war clouds were gathering ominously over the Capitol. The triggering of what had been dubbed the nuclear option seemed just hours away. Armageddon was at hand. Then—like the Wild Bunch, or the Seven Samurai times two, or the Dirty Dozen plus two—a squad of fourteen centrists, half Republicans and half Democrats, rode to the rescue. Their agreement called for (a) free passes for three of President Bush's pending appeals-court nominations, (b) future nominees to be filibustered only in "extraordinary circumstances" (with everyone free to decide when such circumstances exist), and (c) no funny business with Senate Rule XXII—the rule under which it takes sixty of the one hundred senators to end a filibuster (and sixty-seven to end debate on changing the rule under which it takes sixty).

At that point, the metaphors turned peaceable. "The republic is saved!" Harry Reid, the Senate Democratic leader, cried. "The nuclear option is off the table!" But the new status quo is at best an armistice. "It's a truce, not a treaty," Senator Orrin Hatch, Republican of Utah, said the other day. The most likely eventuality is that the Pact of Fourteen will turn out to have been a brief cease-fire, destined to be supplanted by full-blown hostilities at the drop of a Supreme Court vacancy.

Meanwhile, the skirmishing over terminology—the metaphor war—continues. The nuclear option was named by Senator Trent Lott, Republican of Mississippi, in a moment of carelessness. It sounds like a bad thing, so Democrats eagerly adopted it. Republicans, embarrassed, have tried mightily to persuade the press and the public that the phrase is a Democratic calumny, and that the proper term is "constitutional option," which sounds like a good thing. The idea behind the option, however it is styled, is that filibusters of judicial nominations would be declared unconstitutional, not by any court but on a point of order by the President of the Senate—one Dick Cheney. Such a ruling would require only a simple majority of senators to be upheld.



The arguments on both sides of the debate over the constitutionality of the filibuster were thoroughly rehearsed back in 1993, in clashing articles on the op-ed page of the Washington *Post*. One side contended that the filibuster is unconstitutional because the Constitution, by mandating supermajorities in some cases, implicitly forbids them in others; because the Constitution requires only fifty-one senators to be in the room to do normal business; and because requiring sixty votes makes nonsense of the Vice-President's constitutional role as a Senate tie-breaker. The other side contended that the filibuster is constitutional because the Constitution says that the Senate may make its own rules; because the filibuster is hallowed by long practice; and because nothing in the Constitution requires that every bill or nomination must be brought to a final vote. One side, quoting Madison, invoked the democratic principle of ma-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GERALD SCARFE

jority rule; the other, quoting Jefferson, invoked the democratic principle of minority rights.

In 1993, the anti-filibuster op-ed gladiator was Lloyd Cutler, a distinguished Democratic lawyer, who had served as President Carter's White House counsel and was later President Clinton's (and who died on May 8th, aged eighty-seven). The pro-filibuster combatants were George F. Will, the conservative columnist, and Howard Baker, a former Senate Republican leader. The only thing they all agreed on was that dumping the filibuster would, as Will put it, "facilitate the essence of the liberal agenda." Cutler clinched Will's point by noting that measures to punish lynching, strengthen civil rights, and reform campaign financing were the sort that filibusters tended to kill.

Twelve years later, those same constitutional arguments and democratic principles are being trotted out. But they have taken flight and migrated across the aisle, passing each other in midair. Now it's Democrats who stand guard over minority rights, Republicans who champion majority rule. Is it too cynical to suggest that this reversal—both ends of it—may be related to the fact that, in 2005, the agenda whose essence would be facilitated by paring back filibusters is conservative?

Everyone likes democracy, but democracy is problematical when it comes to the Senate in general and the filibuster in particular. The sixty senators it takes to defeat a filibuster can represent as little as 26 per cent of the population or as much as 89 per cent; the fifty-one it takes to reject a nomination can represent anywhere from 18 to 84 per cent. Any relation to either majority prerogatives or minority rights—of citizens, that is, as opposed to members of the senatorial club—is strictly coincidental. The filibuster fight, like much of politics, is about power, a temptation from which not even moderates are immune.

Whether the judicial filibuster stays or goes is for the Senate to determine; no matter what the arguments, there is next to no possibility that the Supreme Court would take it upon itself to overrule whatever the Senate decides in the matter. But because the Court is a separate, nearly sovereign branch of government, because it is the joint creation of the other two branches, and because its members serve for life, the filibuster is surely more legitimate when deployed against judicial nominees than when deployed against legislation (which can be repealed) or executive appointees (who lose their jobs when the President does). Conservatives' insistence that judicial filibusters are uniquely reprehensible has it backward. Their position is incoherent to the point of being unprincipled. It got more incoherent last week, when Republican senators began complaining that the delay in voting on the nomination of John Bolton—not yet a filibuster, but getting there—as Ambassador to the United Nations was somehow a violation of the Pact of Fourteen.

The most interesting section of the moderates' pact is at the end, and it has nothing to do with filibusters per se. "We believe that under Article II, Section 2," the fourteen senators write, referring to the clause that directs the Senate to advise the President on nominations as well as give (or withhold) its consent to them,

> the word "Advice" speaks to consultation between the Senate and the President with regard to the use of the President's power to make nominations. We encourage the Executive branch of government to consult with members of the Senate, both Democratic and Republican, prior to submitting a judicial nomination to the Senate for consideration.

This bit of senatorial advice is firmly grounded in the history and language of the Constitution. If President Bush takes it, and takes it seriously, the men and women he nominates to the Supreme Court will be conservatives of a consensual, not a radical, bent. If he doesn't, please proceed to the nearest fallout shelter.

—Hendrik Hertzberg

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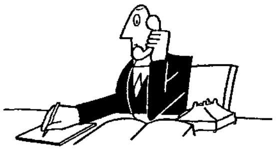
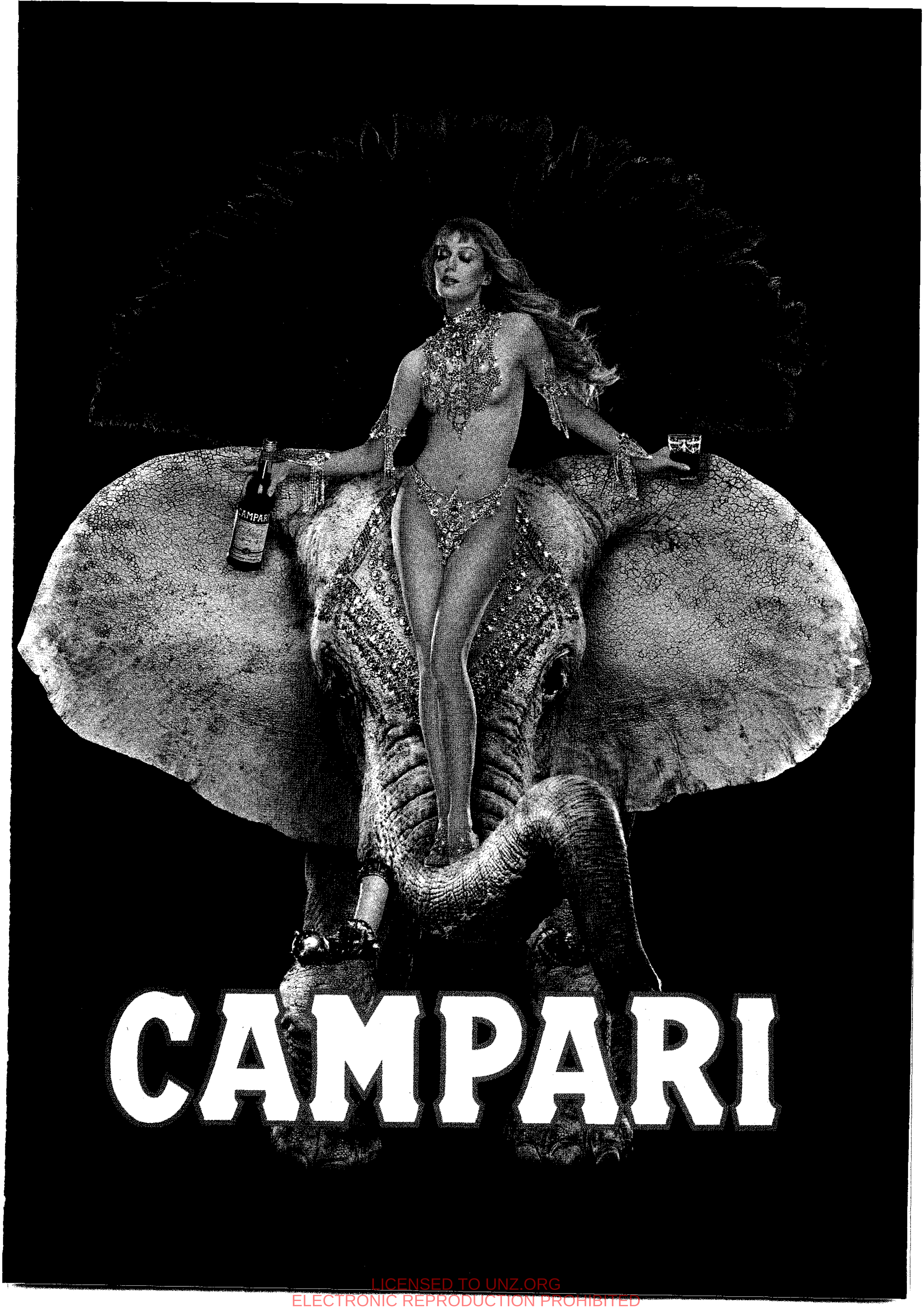
WATERGATE DAYS



It was late in the evening on May 16, 1973, and I was in the Washington bureau of the *Times*, immersed in yet another story about Watergate. The paper had been overwhelmed by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein's reporting for the Washington *Post* the previous year, and I was trying to catch up. The subject this time was Henry Kissinger, President Richard Nixon's national-security adviser. I had called Kissinger to get his comment on a report, which the *Times* was planning to run, that he had been involved in wiretapping reporters, fellow Administration officials, and even his own aides on the National Security Council. At first, he had indignantly denied the story. When I told him that I had information from sources in the Justice Department that he had personally forwarded the wiretap requests to the F.B.I., he was silent, and then said that he might have to resign. The implicit message was that this would be bad for the country, and that the *Times* would be blamed. A few minutes later, the columnist James Reston, who was a friend of Kissinger's, padded up to my desk and asked, gently, if I understood that "Henry" was serious about resigning. I did understand, but Watergate was more important than Kissinger.

Alexander Haig, Kissinger's sometimes loyal deputy, had called a few times during the day to beat back the story. At around seven o'clock, there was a final call. "You're Jewish, aren't you, Seymour?" In all our previous conversations, I'd been "Sy." I said yes. "Let me ask you one question, then," Haig said. "Do you honestly believe that Henry Kissinger, a Jewish refugee from Germany who lost thirteen members of his family to the Nazis, could engage in such police-state tactics as wiretapping his own aides? If there is any doubt, you owe it to yourself, your beliefs, and your nation to give us one day to prove that your story is wrong." That was Watergate, circa 1973. The *Times* printed the story the next day, and Kissinger did not resign.

Access to high-level sources within the government was not so unusual at that point. (I had been given the wiretap information by a senior F.B.I. official, now deceased.) But in the beginning there was only Woodward and Bernstein. In the first months of the scandal, in mid-1972, they had pounded out story after story about the Watergate break-in with little competition from other newspapers, and little support from them, either. To the dismay of Abe Rosenthal, who was then the *Times'* managing editor, the paper's Washington bureau had at first relied on assurances from Kissinger that the *Post's* story would not lead to the most senior officials in the White


CAMPARI
CAMPARI

House. I had deliberately continued writing about Vietnam, staying as far away from Watergate as possible. I didn't believe Kissinger for a moment—but I also thought that Woodward and Bernstein were too far ahead, and too conversant with White House officials whose names I didn't even know. Then, just before Christmas, Clifton Daniel was named Washington bureau chief of the *Times*. He bought me a box of Brooks Brothers shirts and sweaters—he did not think I was up to the *Times*' dress standard—and told me that I was henceforth assigned to Watergate.

A few weeks later, after one of my early stories, which dealt with hush-money payments to a Watergate burglar, appeared in the *Times*, Woodward and Bernstein got in touch with me and essentially welcomed me aboard. That spring, when we were all doing a lot of daily reporting on the coverup, I spent a long evening with the two of them, talking about where the scandal might lead.

The Nixon White House was unable to spin the story, or to control it. In part, this was because of the wealth of information, including documents, that reporters got from sources within the Administration. Many reporters also had sources on the various congressional investigating committees and in the Justice Department and other agencies. One day, newspapers would publish classified C.I.A. memoranda dealing with White House pressure on the agency to help with the coverup; another day, there would be the Senate Watergate committee's internal assessment of the credibility of Nixon's men. If the President and his subordinates were upset about a *Times* story alleging that Nixon had used ethnic and religious slurs, the paper was able to present the White House with a transcript of his comments.

Anonymous sources were essential to the Watergate story. Reporters were in frequent contact with members of Nixon's Cabinet and with high-level investigative and intelligence officials. Some of the men who met with the President, and advised him, provided scathing details about his demeanor and his often ill-advised outbursts.

I knew little about Woodward and Bernstein's sources, and nothing about Deep Throat, whose importance was first made known in their 1974 book, "All the President's Men." I knew W. Mark Felt, identified last week as the critical *Post* source, as a senior F.B.I. official who, like others in the demoralized bureau, was talking to the press. In fact, at the time I thought that Felt was a source for a colleague of mine at the *Times* on at least one story. Felt was a first-rate contact, but Woodward and Bernstein had many excellent sources. Their stories were as accurate as any group of newspaper articles could be. I also suspected that they were talking to many of the same people I was. On one occasion, I visited someone I assumed was a secret source of my own and found a handwritten note saying "Kilroy Was Here" affixed to the outside office door—a token from Woodward.

Many people in government were outraged by the sheer bulk and gravity of the corrupt activities they witnessed in the White House. Reporters were their allies and confidants. Those men, who dealt with the most sensitive national-security issues, had their worst fears confirmed by the revelation, in July, 1973, of the White House's taping system, which recorded their meetings and conversations with the President. They wondered what else they didn't know. Some feared that the government might fall, and some talked to reporters about their concern that the President, facing impeachment, might try to hold on to his office by defying the Constitution.

By May of 1973, the White House coverup was unravelling, and the stalking of Richard Nixon by the wider press corps had begun. Woodward and Bernstein had been more than vindicated. The Nixon Administration, mired in a losing war in Vietnam, was also losing the battle against the truth at home. Throughout the two-year crisis, Watergate was perceived as a domestic issue, but its impact on foreign policy was profound. As memoirs by both Nixon and Kissinger show, neither man understood why the White House could not do what it wanted, at home or in Vietnam. The reason it couldn't is, one hopes, just as valid today: they were operating in a democracy in which they were accountable to a Constitution and to a citizenry that held its leaders to a high standard of morality and integrity. That is the legacy of Watergate.

—*Seymour M. Hersh*

RECORDS DEPT.
PLUNKED

The absence of Barry Bonds from this baseball season has put on hold the home-run-record watch. Smaller, less glamorous achievements will have to do. Fortunately, there is Craig Biggio, who comes to town with the Astros this week for a three-game series at Shea. Biggio is closing in on an all-time record that, while not much celebrated, reflects an impressive fearlessness and durability—masochism, even. He is soon to become the batter who has been hit by the most pitches: the beanball king.

"I've been very lucky and very fortunate," Biggio said the other day, practicing his victory speech on the visitors' clubhouse phone in Milwaukee and reflecting on the passive art of the hit-by-pitch as he stood just six plunks shy of Don Baylor's career two hundred and sixty-seven. "Obviously, to get hit, what, two hundred sixty-something times during the course of my career—and I'm not really all that big; I'm, like, a hundred-eighty-five-pound guy, so—if you would've told me eighteen years ago that this would be happening to me, I would have told you that you're crazy."

His parents and his doctors presumably would have agreed, although, remarkably, Biggio has never been sent to the disabled list by a beanball; nor, in this era of inflated egos and easy umbrage, has he ever charged the mound. He simply takes his lumps—again and again and again.

There have been close calls, of course, and, when it comes to absorbing projectiles, some body parts are better than others. The worst? "I guess the face," Biggio said. "I got hit right in the face on an 0–2 pitch by Jeremi Gonzalez when he was in Chicago, and that was the scariest one, because all I could think about was Dickie Thon." In the annals of the beanball, there are the crowd favorites, such as Baylor and the old Met Ron Hunt, and the grim reminders, such as Ray Chapman, who was killed by a sidearm fastball to the temple, in 1920, and Tony Conigliaro and Dickie Thon, who suffered partial loss of eyesight after beanings in 1967

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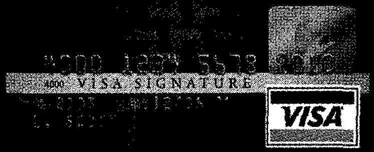

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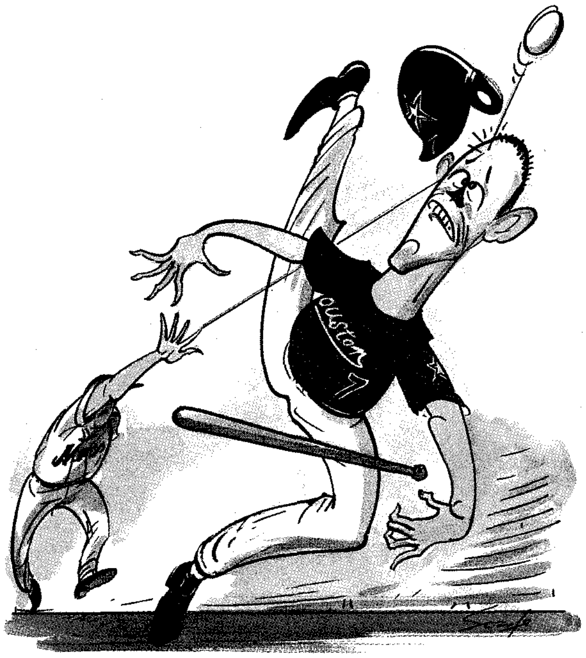
and 1984, respectively. Biggio fared comparatively well with his facial disfigurement: "Right below my eye socket, I had a nice little welt there, yeah." He's also been struck in the helmet four times. "I think the best place to get hit is with a curveball at about sixty-two miles an hour, probably right in the butt," he said.

Despite Biggio's stoicism and relative good fortune, it would be a mistake to think that he enjoys being a target dummy. "Oh, it hurts like hell," he said. "I'm not going to lie about it." In fact, he has a hard time believing that any batter has ever stepped up to the plate intending to be hit: "I mean, who in their right mind would want to try to do that?"

He said he hasn't yet discussed the finer points with Baylor, the reigning champ. "He's a big man and I'm a little man," Biggio said. "I remember growing up as a kid, and Baylor was with the Yankees a little bit, and he just got up there and—a heater would come in, he'd take it in the arm." (Strictly speaking, just taking a heater in the arm without first trying to avoid it would constitute a violation of Rule 6.08 (b) (2).) Biggio attributes his high bean count not to any particular eagerness to suffer for the team but to the high kick with which he begins each swing, which leaves him off balance and less able to react in self-defense when the ball ventures thighward.

His pursuit of the record has gone mostly unheralded thus far, but recently a blog called Plunk Biggio has taken up the cause. ("The author of this blog does not support or endorse intentionally throwing at Craig Biggio," reads a "moral disclaimer" at the bottom of the page.) The blog tracks Biggio's beanballs by date and day of the week (Saturday is tops), and includes game-by-game updates, such as: "Biggio went 2–4 with a double but did not get plunked last night, in another plunk-free evening for both teams." It also features a "Bruise Board," in place of a leaderboard, ranking the genre's high achievers. (Plunk Biggio contends that the true record-holder is not Baylor but Hughie Jennings, a nineteenth-century shortstop who was hit by two hundred and eighty-seven pitches, most of them before there was even an American League.)



Biggio, like a number of contemporary players, now wears a large elbow pad on his left arm, which makes it easier—or less frightening—to lean out over the plate and effectively shrink the strike zone. "Obviously, pitchers have a hard time with it," he said. "But, you know, my problem is, it hurts. I got hit in that elbow one time and I said, 'Aw, man, it really hurts, but you know what? I'm not gonna wear the pad.' And then the next night Danny Darwin hit me in the same exact spot."

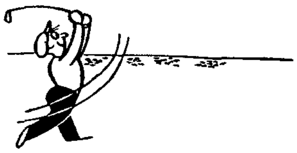
He went on, "You saw Jeter the other day when he got hit and his elbow swelled up real bad? Now you compound that by going out there the next night and getting hit in that same spot. It'll bring you to tears."

Baylor, the big man, took his shots in the bare arm. If that means an asterisk for Craig Biggio, so be it.

—*Ben McGrath*

POSTSCRIPT

HERBERT WARREN WIND



George Plimpton's theory of sportswriting was the smaller the ball, the better the literature. And while Plimpton never provided any historical evidence of a bard of marbles, he was probably right. Herbert Warren Wind, who wrote (mainly) about golf for this magazine, beginning in 1947, and who died last week, at the age of eighty-eight, often said that Charles Darwin's grandson—Bernard Darwin, of the London *Times* and *Country Life*—was the greatest of all golf writers. One could easily find a place in the clubhouse as well for P. G. Wodehouse, John Updike, Michael Murphy, and Dan Jenkins, but Wind himself was surely the most devoted American on the course, and the most elegant. His writing on the game, and on tennis and other sports, too (he wrote a particularly strange and wonderful disquisition on the history of football placekicking), was always spare, measured, and sure, like the man.

Wind was equally acute on the complexities of the game and on the characters of the players. He was, in spirit, prelapsarian, uninterested in the issues of money, endorsements, or scandal of any kind. If he had a hero in golf, and even in life, it was certainly Bobby Jones, who won thirteen major championships as an amateur between 1923 and 1930 and then went on to help design the ne plus ultra of American courses, Augusta National, the site of the Masters. Jones was an educated athlete, a lawyer, a writer, and a reader, and the two men became friends, talking about books and the intricacies of golf. Wind learned a great deal from his subject. "About three days before Jones's death, when he knew he was dying, he said to the members of his family, 'If this is all there is to it, it sure is peaceful,' " Wind wrote in 1972. "That is good to know."

As a young man, Herb Wind was an excellent golfer. He had a big, modern swing, but he always cut a traditionalist's figure. His self-effacing, uncomplaining manner, his chesty stride, his clothes, even the tripartite name—Herbert Warren Wind—seemed a thing of the pastoral, perhaps English, past. Tweed, of course, was his preferred fabric. He once showed up on a course in all-tweed, including tweed knickers and a tweed cap. It was the middle of July.

"Aren't you a little hot, Herb?" his partner asked him.

"Yes, I am," he replied.

—*David Remnick*

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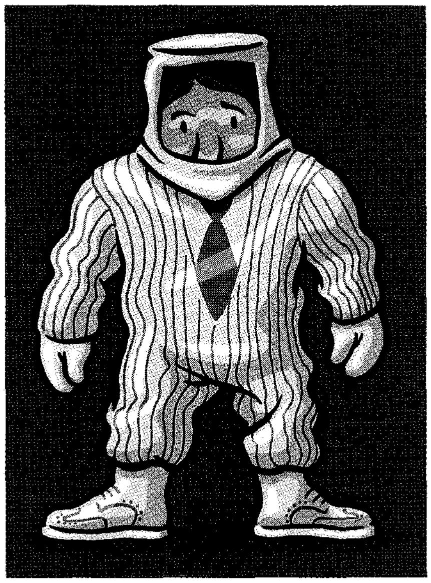
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

In the early nineteen-eighties, American businesses discovered that they could manage crises, rather than merely stumble through them. The gold standard was Johnson & Johnson, whose deft maneuvering, after seven people died from ingesting cyanide-laced Extra Strength Tylenol, helped create a new and lucrative subset of public relations known as crisis management, which was poised, as *Time* put it in 1986, to become "the new corporate discipline."

Practice—and lately there's been plenty of it—has not made perfect. Companies may now have packs of superflacks on hand, but in the glare of bad publicity they can still appear as helpless as possums in the road. In the past few years, stalwarts like Firestone, CBS News, Tyco, and Marsh & McLennan have seen their reputations demolished, mainly because they did such a lousy job of dealing with bad news. Most recently, Wendy's took a month to discredit a woman who claimed that she'd found a human finger in her chili. (She's since been arrested for putting it there.) The delay cost millions of dollars in sales and did incalculable harm to the brand.

The term "crisis management" may seem like little more than a euphemism for "snow job," but there is an art to it. Spin alone won't do the trick. Without going overboard, the offending company needs to acknowledge that it has a problem, demonstrate that it has control over that problem, and then make a real attempt to fix it. This holds true whether or not the company is at fault. Johnson & Johnson defused the Tylenol crisis in large part because it recalled every Tylenol capsule in America, and then quickly introduced tamper-proof bottles. In the end, the company was seen as the victim. By contrast, when news broke, in 2000, that more than a hundred people had died in accidents involving defective Firestone tires, Firestone initially reacted by blaming drivers (for underinflating their tires) and Ford (whose S.U.V.s were involved in most of the accidents). Dispirited by this strategy, Firestone's P.R. firm quit. Eventually, Firestone recalled 6.5 million tires, but it was too late. Sales plummeted, and claims mounted into the hundreds of millions.

Many companies have basic assumptions about public relations that can hurt them during a crisis. They tend, as people do, to stonewall and deny. But, as Ian Mitroff, a crisis-management specialist at U.S.C., has said, "There are no secrets in today's world." And if the truth is on your side you have to insure that it emerges quickly. In 1993, when syringes ended up in Pepsi soda cans, allegedly as a result of a flawed canning process, the company, within a few days, produced videos of its entire canning process and denounced its accusers as frauds. Wendy's, on the other hand, wasted a month investigating its entire supply chain, made little of the fact that the accuser had a long history of suing companies on dubious grounds, and, bizarrely, spent more than a week figuring out if the finger had been cooked. In the meantime, parents took the kids to Roy Rogers.



It's easy to make intelligent decisions after the fact. The real challenge is making them in moments of anxiety and panic, so, while crisis-management gurus don't always agree on what the strategy should be, they do agree that everyone should at least have one, before crisis hits. Their clients tend not to listen. Mitroff estimates that less than a fifth of big corporations have formal crisis-management plans. The crisis plans that do exist vary in detail and scope—Dow Chemical had one that included the names of the people who would be responsible for running the copy machines—but, basically, they suggest vulnerabilities (and potential remedies), identify a crisis-management team, and lay out a general script.

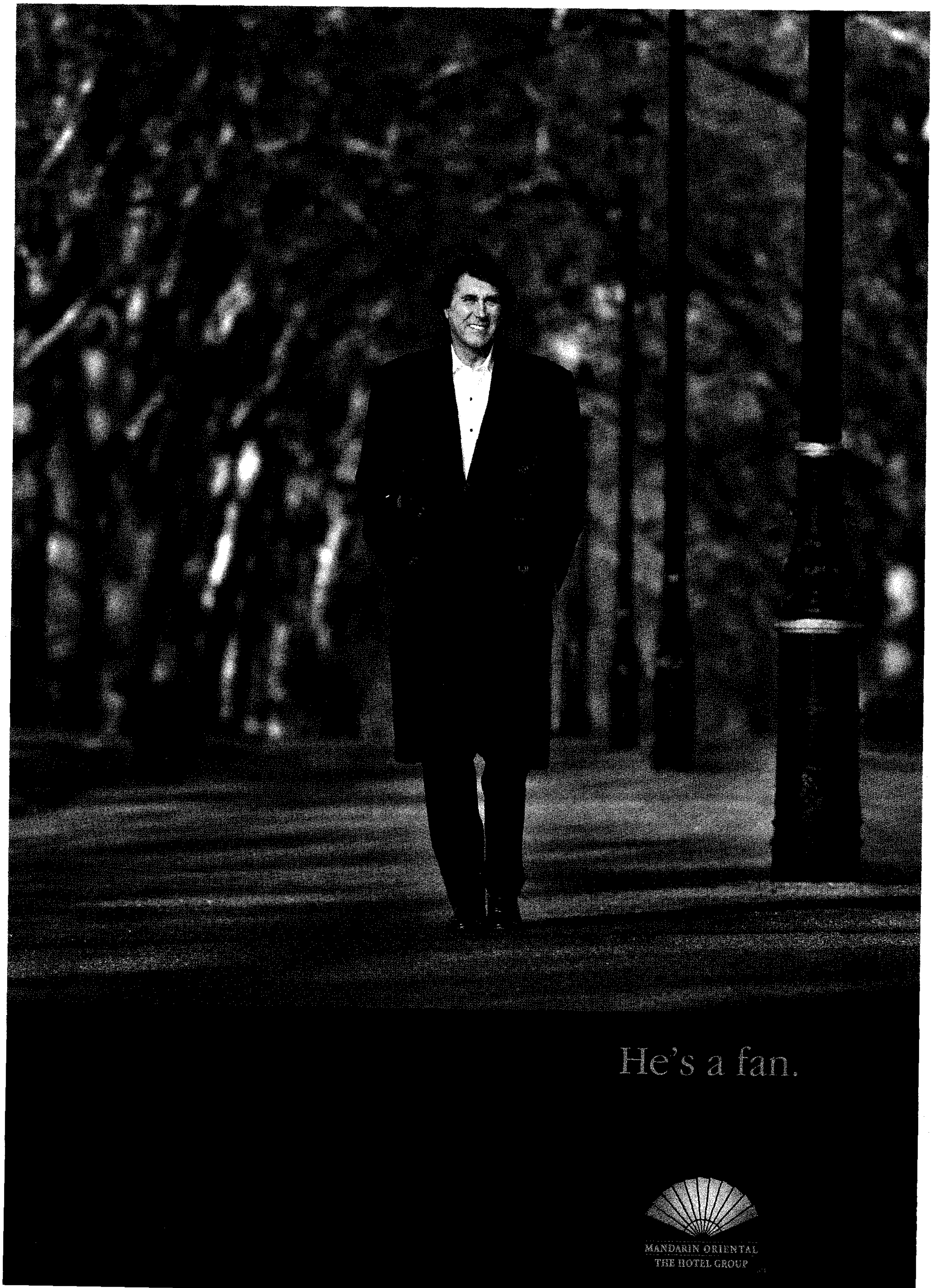
Even a simple plan is valuable; though crises are, by definition, rare, they should not be unthinkable. A study released last week by the Institute for Crisis Management found that just a quarter of business crises come out of the blue. Most are "smoldering" rather than sudden, and are the result of mistakes that management has made. Signs of trouble exist but are ignored or overlooked. Many of the most famous crises are examples of what the sociologist Charles Perrow has called "normal accidents." As technologies and organizations get more complicated, Perrow argued, they are more likely to break down, even in the absence of malice or intentional neglect. Firestone, the Challenger explosion, Intel's flawed Pentium chip: you could argue that these were all, in one way or another, normal accidents.

Why are companies so often caught unaware? It turns out that the events that create crises are usually those which most people have trouble taking seriously—that is, events with a low probability but a high cost. We tend to treat low-probability events as if they were impossible. Instead of preparing for them, we ignore them. In the phrase of the sociologist Neil Weinstein, we are "unrealistic optimists." This tendency is exacerbated when we think we're in control; we worry less about the dangers of driving than about those of flying because we think we determine what happens to us on the road.

Of course, unrealistic optimism, insofar as it's a byproduct of self-assurance, assertiveness, and conviction, may be a handy trait for those seeking success in business. It will come as a surprise to no one that in most surveys executives are found to be consistently optimistic and overconfident. Entrepreneurs are the cockiest of all. It may be that the very qualities that help people get ahead are the ones that make them ill-suited for managing crises. It's hard to prepare for the worst when you think you're the best.

—*James Surowiecki*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN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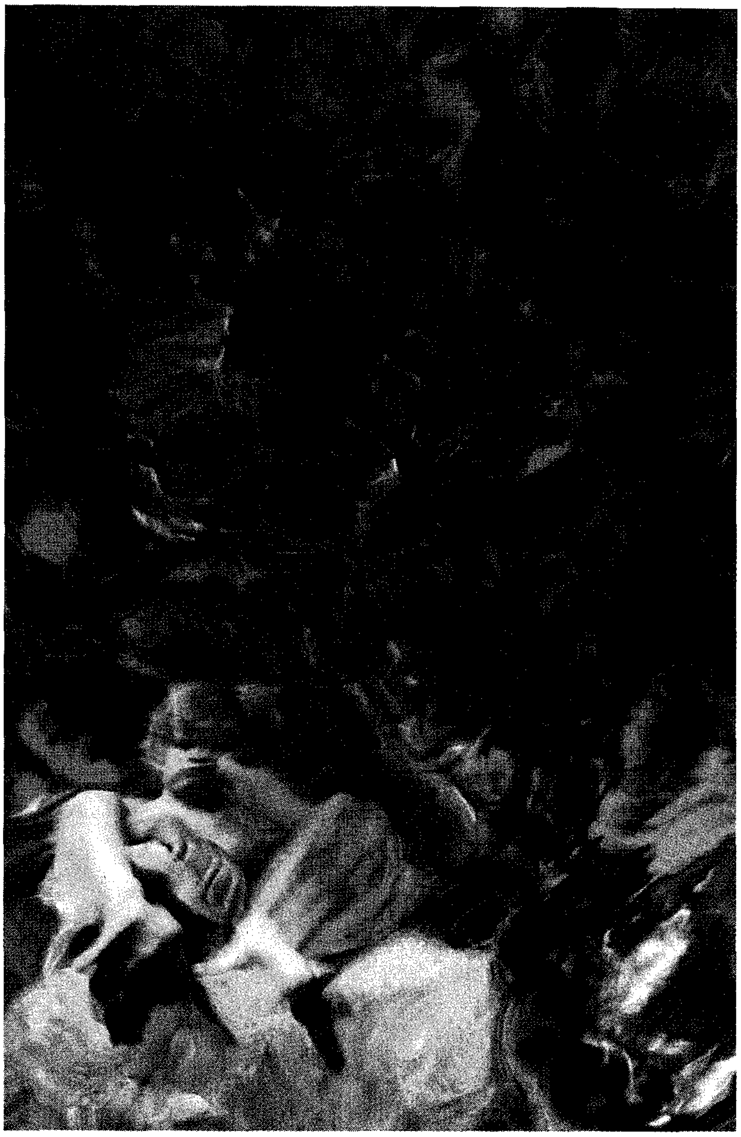
DÉBUT FICTION

HAUNTING OLIVIA

BY KAREN RUSSELL



PAMELA CRIMMINS, "KEVIN" (2001)/LITTLEJOHN CONTEMPORARY

My brother Wallow has been kicking around Gannon's Boat Graveyard for more than an hour, too embarrassed to admit that he doesn't see any ghosts. Instead, he slaps at the ocean with jilted fury. Curse words come piping out of his snorkel. He keeps pausing to readjust the diabolical goggles.

The diabolical goggles were designed for little girls. They are pink, with a floral snorkel attached to the side. They have scratchproof lenses and an adjustable band. Wallow says that we are going to use them to find our dead sister, Olivia.

My brother and I have been making midnight scavenging trips to Gannon's all summer. It's a watery junk yard, a place where people pay to abandon their old boats. Gannon, the grizzled, tattooed undertaker, tows wrecked ships into his marina. Battered sailboats and listing skiffs, yachts with stupid names—Knot at Work and Sail-la-Vie—the paint peeling from their puns. They sink beneath the water in slow increments, covered with rot and barnacles. Their masts jut out at weird angles. The marina is an open, easy grave to rob. We ride our bikes along the rock wall, coasting quietly past Gannon's tin shack, and hop off at the derelict pier. Then we creep down to the ladder, jump onto the nearest boat, and loot.

It's dubious booty. We mostly find stuff with no resale value: soggy flares and UHF radios, a one-eyed cat yowling on a dinghy. But the goggles are a first. We found them floating in a live-bait tank, deep in the cabin of La Calavera, a swamped Largo schooner. We'd pushed our way through a small hole in the prow. Inside, the cabin was rank and flooded. There was no bait living in that tank, just the goggles and a foamy liquid the color of root beer. I dared Wallow to put the goggles on and stick his head in it. I didn't actually expect him to find anything; I just wanted to laugh at Wallow in the pink goggles, bobbing for diseases. But when he surfaced, tearing at the goggles, he told me that he'd seen the orange, unholy light of a fish ghost. Several, in fact—a school of ghoulish mullet.

"They looked just like regular baitfish, bro," Wallow said. "Only deader." I told my brother that I was familiar with the definition of a ghost. Not that I believed a word of it, you understand.

Now Wallow is trying the goggles out in the marina, to see if his vision extends beyond the tank. I'm dangling my legs over the edge of the pier, half-expecting something to grab me and pull me under. "Wallow! You see anything phantasmic yet?"

"Nothing," he bubbles morosely through the snorkel. "I can't see a thing."

I'm not surprised. The water in the boat basin is a cloudy mess. But I'm impressed by Wallow's one-armed doggy paddle.

Wallow shouldn't be swimming at all. Last Thursday, he slipped on one of the banana peels that Granana leaves around the house. I know. I didn't think it could happen outside of cartoons, either. Now his right arm is in a plaster

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cast, and in order to enter the water he has to hold it above his head. It looks like he's riding an aquatic unicycle. That buoyancy—it's unexpected. On land, Wallow's a loutish kid. He bulldozes whatever gets in his path: baby strollers, widowers, me.

For brothers, Wallow and I look nothing alike. I've got Dad's blond hair and blue eyes, his embraceably lanky physique. Olivia was equally Heartland, apple cheeks and unnervingly white teeth. Not Wallow. He's got this dental affliction which gives him a tusky, warthog grin. He wears his hair in a greased pompadour and has a thick pelt of back hair. There's no accounting for it. Dad jokes that our mom must have had dalliances with a Minotaur.

Wallow is not Wallow's real name, of course. His real name is Waldo Swallow. Just like I'm Timothy Sparrow and Olivia was—is—Olivia Lark. Our parents used to be bird enthusiasts. That's how they met: Dad spotted my mother on a bird-watching tour of the swamp, her beauty magnified by his 10x binoculars. Dad says that by the time he lowered them the spoonbills he'd been trying to see had scattered, and he was in love. When Wallow and I were very young, they used to take us on their creepy bird excursions, kayaking down island canals, spying on blue herons and coots. These days, they're not enthusiastic about much, feathered or otherwise. They leave us with Granana for months at a time.

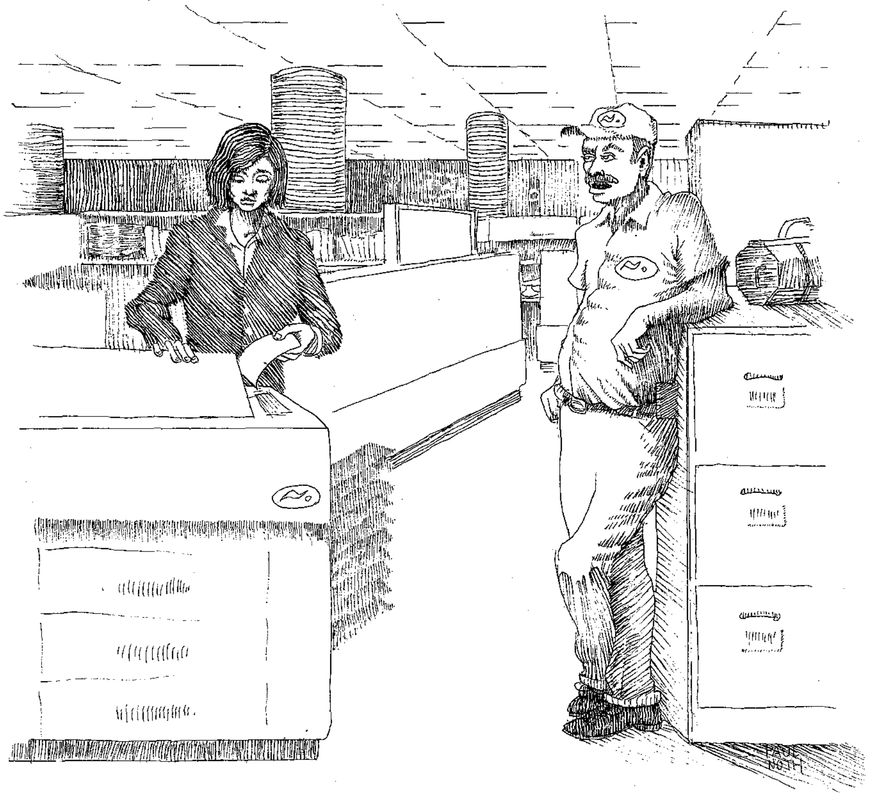
Shortly after Olivia's death, my parents started travelling regularly in the Third World. No children allowed. Granana lives on the other side of the island. She's eighty-four, I'm twelve, and Wallow's fourteen, so it's a little ambiguous as to who's babysitting whom. This particular summer, our parents are in São Paulo. They send us postcards of bullet-pocked favelas and flaming hillocks of trash. "GLAD YOU'RE NOT HERE! XOXO, THE 'RENTS.' " I guess the idea is that all the misery makes their marital problems seem petty and inconsequential.

"Hey!" Wallow is directly below me, clutching the rails of the ladder. "Move over."

He climbs up and heaves his big body onto the pier. Defeat puddles all around him. Behind the diabolical goggles, his eyes narrow into slits.

"Did you see them?"

Wallow just grunts. "Here." He wrestles the lady-goggles off his face and thrusts them at me. "I can't swim with this cast, and these bitches are too small for my skull. You try them."



"You Democrats will never win back the red states if you keep refusing to go out with me."

I sigh and strip off my pajamas, bobbling before him. The elastic band of the goggles bites into the back of my head. Somehow, wearing them makes me feel even more naked. My penis is curling up in the salt air like a small pink snail. Wallow points and laughs.

"Sure you don't want to try again?" I ask him. From the edge of the pier, the ocean looks dark and unfamiliar, like the liquid shadow of something truly awful. "Try again, Wallow. Maybe it's just taking a while for your eyes to adjust—"

Wallow holds a finger to his lips. He points behind me. Boats are creaking in the wind, waves slap against the pilings, and then I hear it, too, the distinct thunk of boots on wood. Someone is walking down the pier. We can see the tip of a lit cigarette, suspended in the dark. We hear a man's gargly cough.

"Looking for buried treasure, boys?" Gannon laughs. He keeps walking toward us. "You know, the court still considers it trespassing, be it land or sea." Then he recognizes Wallow. He lets out the low, mournful whistle that all the grownups on the island use to identify us now.

"Oh, son. Don't tell me you're out here looking for—"

"My dead sister?" Wallow asks with terrifying cheer. "Good guess!"

"You're not going to find her in my marina, boys."

In the dark, Gannon is a huge stencil of a man, wisps of smoke curling from his nostrils. There is a long, pulsing silence, during which Wallow stares at him, squaring his jaw. Then Gannon shrugs. He stubs out his cigarette and shuffles back toward the shore.

"All right, bro," Wallow says. "It's go time." He takes my elbow and gentles me down the planks with such tenderness that I am suddenly very afraid. But there's no sense making the plunge slow and unbearable. I take a running leap down the pier—

"Ayyyyiii!"

—and launch over the water. It's my favorite moment: I'm one toe away from flight and my body takes over. The

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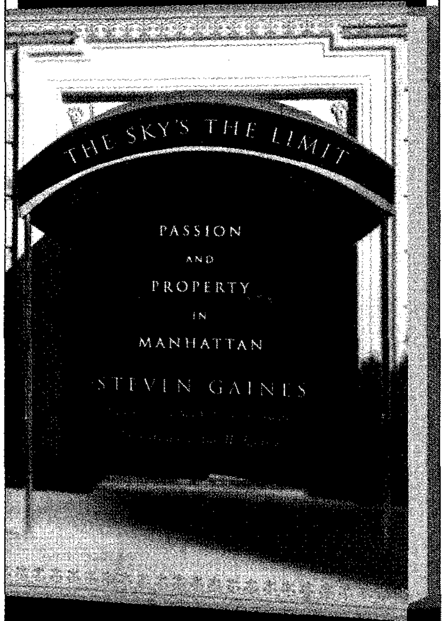

"Addictive."
—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

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choice is made, but the consequence is still just an inky shimmer beneath me. I'm rushing to meet my own reflection—gah!

Then comes the less beautiful moment when I'm up to my eyeballs in tar water, and the goggles fill with stinging brine. And, for what seems like a very long time, I can't see anything at all, dead or alive.

When my vision starts to clear, I see a milky, melting light moving swiftly above the ocean floor. Drowned moonbeams, I think at first. Only there is no moon tonight.

Olivia disappeared on a new-moon night. It was exactly two years, or twenty-four new moons, ago. Wallow says that means that tonight is Olivia's unbirthday, the anniversary of her death. It's weird: our grief is cyclical, synched with the lunar cycles. It accordions out as the moon slivers away. On new-moon nights, it rises with the tide.

Even before we lost my sis, I used to get uneasy when the moon was gone. That corner of the sky, as black as an empty safe. Whatever happened to Olivia, I hope she at least had the orange residue of sunset to see by. I can't stand to think of her out here alone after nightfall.

The last time we saw Olivia was at twilight. We'd spent all day crab sledding down the beach. It's the closest thing we island kids have to a winter sport. You climb into the upended exoskeleton of a giant crab, then you go yeehaw slaloming down the powdery dunes. The faster you go, the more sand whizzes around you, a fine spray on either side of your crab sled. By the time you hit the water, you're covered in it, grit in your teeth and your eyelids, along the line of your scalp.

Herb makes the crab sleds—he guts the crabs and blowtorches off the eyestalks and paints little racer stripes along the side. Then he rents them down at Pier 2, for two dollars an hour, twelve dollars for a full day. The three of us had been racing down the beach all afternoon. We were sunburned, and hungry, and loused up with sea bugs. Wallow had stepped on a sea urchin and broken his fall on more urchins. I wanted Jiffy Pop and aloe vera. Wallow wanted prescription painkillers and porno. We voted to head over to Granana's beach cottage, because she has Demerol and an illegal cable box.

Olivia threw a fit. "But we still have half an hour on the sled rental!" A gleam came into her eyes, that transparent little-kid craftiness. "You guys don't have to come with me, you know."

Legally, we did. According to official Herb's Crab Sledding policy, under-twelves must be accompanied by a guardian—a rule that Herb has really cracked down on since Olivia's death. But neither Wallow nor I felt like chaperoning. And Olivia was eight and a half, which rounds up to twelve. "Stick to the perimeter of the island," Wallow told her. "And get that crab sled back before sundown. Any late fees are coming out of your allowance."

"Yeah, yeah," she assured us, clambering into the sled. The sun was already low in the sky. "I'm just going out one last time."

We helped Olivia drag the sled up the white dunes. She sat Indian style in the center of the shell, humming tunelessly. Then we gave her a final push that sent her racing down the slopes. We watched as she flew out over the rock crags and into the foamy water. By the time we'd gathered our towels and turned to go, Olivia was just a speck on the horizon. Neither of us noticed how quickly the tide was going out.

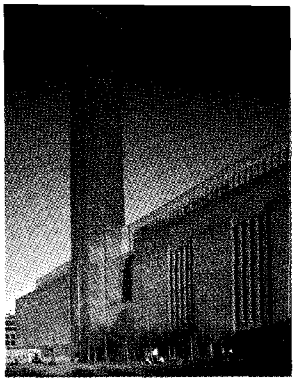
Most people think that tides are caused by the moon alone, but that is not the case. Once a month, the sun and the moon are both on the same side of the globe. Then the Atlantic kowtows to their conglomerate gravity. It's the earth playing tug-of-war with the sky.

On new-moon nights, the sky is winning. The spring tide swells exceptionally high. The spring tide has teeth. It can pull a boat much farther than your average quarter-moon neap tide. When they finally found Olivia's crab sled, it was halfway to Cuba, and empty.

"What do you see, bro?"

"Oh, not much." I cough. I peer back under the surface of the water. There's an aurora borealis exploding inches from my submerged face. "Probably just plankton."

When I come up to clear the goggles, I can barely see Wallow. He is silhouetted against the lone orange lamp, watch-



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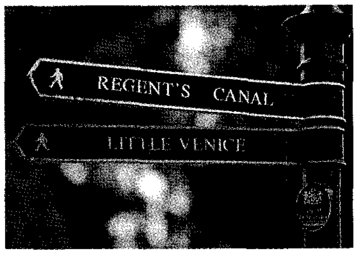

A SUMMER TOUR

By Tim Geary

London is at its most glorious during the long days of summer. Natives take to the parks and the river, gather picnics from city markets, and revel in outdoor theatre, music, and street festivals.

It is easy to enjoy the city like an insider. Start with where you stay: Look at accommodations in areas like Clapham, Notting Hill, Clerkenwell, Camden, or Islington for an authentic local experience. Furnished apartments with kitchens can be a savvy alternative to hotels if you're planning a stay of a week or more, and leasing options are easily found online.

Set up your home base in the east of London for the richness of its immigrant history and diversity of its markets. Sundays are best at **Spitalfields Market** when it is crowded with stalls selling fruit and vegetables, antiques, vintage and designer clothing, and fresh flowers. On the market's edge, **A. Gold** (42 Brushfield Street), combines historic charm with new standards in traditional British items. Stock up on cheeses and homemade pies or have a go at some mead, perhaps the world's oldest alcoholic drink. **St. John Bread and Wine** (94–96 Commercial Street), with an on-premise bakery, offers equally delicious modern British fare such as smoked sprats and roasted guinea fowl.

Local color is on full display at **Petticoat Lane Market** (clothing, fabrics, leather) and the ethnic **Brick Lane Market** where bagels, salt beef, and pickles are sold alongside Indian spices and jellied eels. The area's flower market on Columbia Road is a sparkling jewel on Sundays and the famed **Whitechapel Art Gallery** boasts the latest modern and contemporary British art.

A flat in South London gives access to the vibrant South Bank of the Thames. Throughout the summer the **Coin Street Festival** features multicultural street performances and culminates with **Mayor's Thames Festival**, a September riverside bazaar and night market sprawling from Tower Bridge to the London Eye. **Gabriel's Wharf** is ideal for alfresco eating and **Borough Market** is popular for seasonal produce.

While on the South Bank, the open-air **Globe Theatre,** modeled accurately after the original Shakespearean theatre, offers "The Tempest" among its summer highlights. And at the cavernous **Tate Modern** museum, a major exhibition of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo's works is showing all summer. To enjoy the summer breezes, hop the boat to the **Tate Britain** where "A Picture of Britain" explores the British landscape through the eyes of its major artists, June 16–September 4.

With its canals, gardens and parks, North London could be the best of all worlds in summer. Life slows down on barges between **Little Venice** and **Camden Lock** where the meandering markets are open Tuesday through Sunday. Cool off in one of **Hampstead Heath's** clear swimming ponds before trying the **Rose & Crown** (86 Highgate High Street) for French-inspired pub food.

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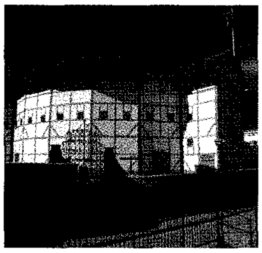
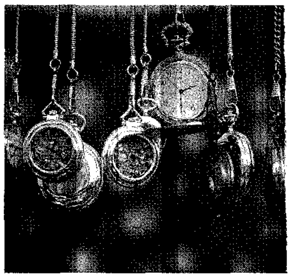




PARK IT *Londoners make the parks a part of their lives in summertime, whether renting deck chairs over lunch in Hyde Park, taking tea in Kensington's Orangery or boating on the Serpentine. Four of the eight Royal Parks extend three miles across the heart of London offering tennis and horseback riding, rollerblading, and swimming, as well as a refuge from climbing temps and urban buzz. The refreshing pond and waterfall of the Kyoto Garden in Holland Park starkly contrast the city's bustling streets; the Battersea nature reserve's 200 acres brings wildlife to London; in the huge Richmond Park, deer roam freely, and Richmond Hill still offers London's most painted panorama—beautiful now as it has been for centuries.*

One of London's hippest neighborhoods, **Marylebone High Street**, is also the place to stock up on picnic supplies for a laze in **Regent's Park** or to fortify a walk up to **Primrose Hill** for excellent views of the capital. On Sundays, the **Farmer's Market on Moxon Street** is busy with Londoners buying luscious seasonal organic fruits and vegetables, herbs, and flowers from small local farms. Throughout the week, buy fresh fish (or eat it there) at **Fishworks** (89 Marylebone High Street), or visit the renowned **La Fromagerie** (2-4 Moxon Street) with its savory array of cheeses, rare wines, and preserves.

On balmy evenings in West London, it is the mighty Thames that lures people to pubs such as **The Old Ship** (25 Upper Mall) in Hammersmith. Away from the river in Notting Hill, avoid the crowds, and on weekdays visit the **Portobello Market** for its antiques and collectibles. On August 28th and 29th, the Caribbean-inspired **Notting Hill Carnival** takes over, with floats and steel bands creating Europe's largest street festival. For more refined tastes, the tented opera series in **Holland Park** is one of London's summer gems. ✻

Planning your summer vacation? Go to visitlondon.com.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

WIRELESS FESTIVAL *June 24–25 and 29–30; Hyde Park.* Roster includes UK's biggest new bands, Keane and Kasabian, as well as New Order.

MUSIC ON A SUMMER EVENING *Most Saturdays July 2–August 28; Kenwood House, Hampstead.* Picnic under fireworks while hearing artists such as Elvis Costello and Ibrahim Ferrar. Magnificent house and grounds are open every day (free admission), so try to catch a rehearsal.

SOMERSET HOUSE SUMMER SERIES *July 5–13.* Musicians performing in the courtyard of Somerset House include Beth Orton, Doves, and Sigur Rós.

SUMMER SWING *July 12–17; Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew Richmond.* Lineup by the Thames includes Jools Holland, Omara Portuondo from Buena Vista Social Club, and Clare Teal.

PORTOBELLO FILM FESTIVAL *July 30–August 21; various venues.* Growing independent film fest. Entry to all events is free.

ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS SUMMER EXHIBITION *Now through August 15th.* Most works are for sale at the world's largest open-submission contemporary art fair. *From July 2–September 11* "Impressionism Abroad: Boston and French Painting" to include works of Sargent, Monet, Pissarro, and Millet.

OPEN AIR THEATRE *Now through September 10th, Regent's Park.* This year, the New Shakespeare Company repertoire to include "Cymbeline" and "Twelfth Night." Stand-up comedy also on tap.

BETH ORTON IMAGE: © MELANIE COX/CORBIS; ANTIQUE WATCHES IMAGE: © ED WHEELER/CORBIS; DECK CHAIRS IMAGE: PATRICK WARD/CORBIS; ALL OTHER IMAGES: © VISIT LONDON

ing me from the pier. Water seeps out of my nose, my ears. It weeps down the corners of the lenses. I push the goggles up and rub my eyes with my fists, which just makes things worse. I kick to stay afloat, the snorkel digging into my cheek, and wave at my brother. Wallow doesn't wave back.

I don't want to tell Wallow, but I have no idea what I just saw, although I'm sure there must be some ugly explanation for it. I tell myself that it was just cyanobacteria, or lustrous pollutants from the Bimini glue factory. Either way, I don't want to double-check. I shiver in the water, letting the salt dry on my shoulders, listening to the echo of my breath in the snorkel. I fantasize about towels. But Wallow is still watching me, his face a blank oval. I tug at the goggles and stick my head under for a second look.

Immediately, I bite down on the mouthpiece of the snorkel to stop myself from screaming. The goggles: they work. And every inch of the ocean is haunted. There are ghost fish swimming all around me. My hands pass right through their flat bodies. Phantom crabs shake their phantom claws at me from behind a sunken anchor. Octopuses cartwheel by, leaving an effulgent red trail. A school of minnows swims right through my belly button. Dead, I think. They are all dead.

"Um, Wallow?" I gasp, spitting out the snorkel. "I don't think I can do this."

"Sure you can."

Squat, boulder-shouldered, Wallow is standing over the ladder, guarding it like a gargoyle. There's nowhere for me to go but back under the water.

Getting used to aquatic ghosts is like adjusting to the temperature of the ocean. After the initial shock gives way, your body numbs. It takes a few more close encounters with the lambent fish before my pulse quiets down. Once I realize that the ghost fish can't hurt me, I relax into something I'd call delight if I weren't supposed to be feeling bereaved.

I spend the next two hours pretending to look for Olivia. I shadow the spirit manatees, their backs scored with keloid stars from motorboat propellers. I somersault through stingrays. Bonefish flicker around me like mute banshees. I figure out how to braid the furry blue light of dead coral reef through my fingertips. I've started to enjoy myself, and I've nearly succeeded in exorcising Olivia from my thoughts, when a bunch of ghost shrimp materialize in front of my goggles, like a photo rinsed in a developing tray. The shrimp twist into a glowing alphabet, some curling, some flattening, touching tails to antennae in smoky contortions. Then they loop together to form words, as if drawn by some invisible hand: "G-L-O-W-W-O-R-M G-R-O-T-T-O."

We thought the Glowworm Grotto was just more of Olivia's make-believe. Olivia was a cartographer of imaginary places. She'd crayon elaborate maps of invisible castles and sunken cities. When the Glowworm Grotto is part of a portfolio that includes Mt. Waffle Cone, it's hard to take it seriously.

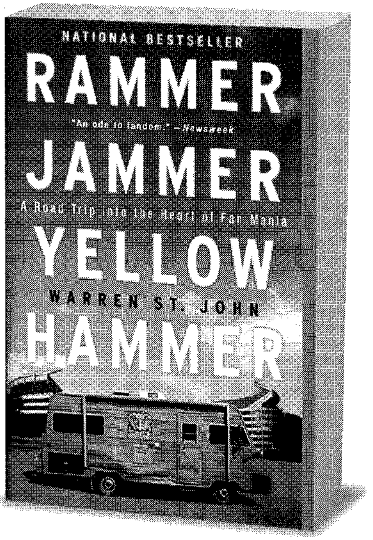
I loved Olivia. But that doesn't mean I didn't recognize that she was one weird little kid. She used to suffer these intense bouts of homesickness in her own bedroom. When she was very small, she would wake up tearing at her bedspread and shrieking, "I wanna go home! I wanna go home!"—which was distressing to all of us, of course, because she *was* home.

That said, I wouldn't be surprised to learn that Olivia was an adoptee from some other planet. She used to change into Wallow's rubbery yellow flippers on the bus, then waddle around the school halls like some disoriented mallard. She played "house" by getting the broom and sweeping the neon corpses of dead jellyfish off the beach. Her eyes were a stripey cerulean, inhumanly bright. Dad used to tell Olivia that a merman artisan had made them, out of bits of sea glass from Atlantis.

Wallow saved all of her drawings. The one labelled "GLOWERM GROTO" is a sketch of a dusky red cave, with a little stick-Olivia swimming into the entrance. Another drawing shows the roof of the cave. It looks like a swirly firmament of stars, dalmatianed with yellow dots.

"That's what you see when you're floating on your back," Olivia told us, rubbing the gray crayon down to its nub. "The Glowworm Grotto looks just like the night sky."

"That's nice," we said, exchanging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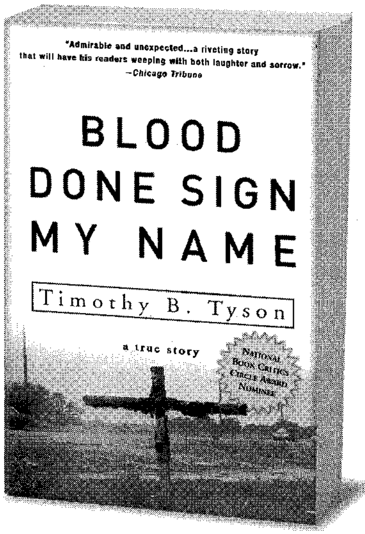
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glances. Neither Wallow nor I knew of any caves along the island shore. I figured it must be another Olivia utopia, a no-place. Wallow thought it was Olivia's oddball interpretation of Gannon's Boat Graveyard.

"Maybe that rusty boat hangar looked like the entrance to a cave to her," he'd said. Maybe. If you were eight, and nearsighted, and nostalgic for places that you'd never been.

But, if the Glowworm Grotto actually exists, that changes everything. Olivia's ghost could be there now, twitching her nose with rabbity indignation—"But I left you a map!" Wondering what took us so long to find her.

When I surface, the stars have vanished. The clouds are turning red around their edges. I can hear Wallow snoring on the pier. I pull my naked body up and flop onto the warm planks, feeling salt-shucked and newborn. When I spit the snorkel out of my mouth, the unfiltered air tastes acrid and foreign. The Glowworm Grotto. I wish I didn't have to tell Wallow. I wish we'd never found the stupid goggles. There are certain things that I don't want to see.

When we get back to Granana's, her cottage is shuttered and dark. Fat raindrops, the icicles of the Tropics, hang from the eaves. We can hear her watching "Evangelical Bingo" in the next room.

"Revelation 20:13!" she hoots. "Bingo!"

Our breakfast is on the table: banana pancakes, with a side of banana pudding. The kitchen is sticky with brown peels and syrup. Granana no longer has any teeth. For the past two decades, she has subsisted almost entirely on bananas, banana-based dishes, and other foods that you can gum. This means that her farts smell funny, and her calf muscles frequently give out. It means that Wallow and I eat out a lot during the summer.

Wallow finds Olivia's old drawings of the Glowworm Grotto. We spread them out on the table, next to a Crab Shack menu with a cartoon map of the island. Wallow is busy highlighting the jagged shoreline, circling places that might harbor a cave, when Granana shuffles into the kitchen. "What's all this?" She peers over my shoulder. "Christ," she says. "Still mooning over that old business?"

Granana doesn't understand what the big deal is. She didn't cry at Olivia's funeral, and I doubt she even remembers Olivia's name. Granana lost, like, ninety-two million kids in childbirth. All of her brothers died in the war. She survived the Depression by stealing radish bulbs from her neighbors' garden, and fishing the elms for pigeons. Dad likes to say this in a grave voice, as if it explained her jaundiced pitilessness: "Boys. Your grandmother ate pigeons."

"Wasn't much for drawing, was she?" Granana says. She taps at stick-Olivia. "Wasn't much for swimming, either."

Wallow visibly stiffens. For a second, I'm worried that he's going to slug Granana in her wattled neck. Then she raises her drawn-on eyebrows. "Would you look at that—the nudey cave. Your grandfather used to take me skinny-dipping there."

Wallow and I do an autonomic, full-body shudder. I get a sudden mental image of two shelled walnuts floating in a glass.

"You mean you recognize this place, Granana?"

"No thanks to this chicken scratch!" She points to an orange dot in the corner of the picture, so small that I hadn't even noticed it. "But look where she drew the sunset. Use your noggins. Must be one of them coves on the western side of the island. I don't remember exactly where."

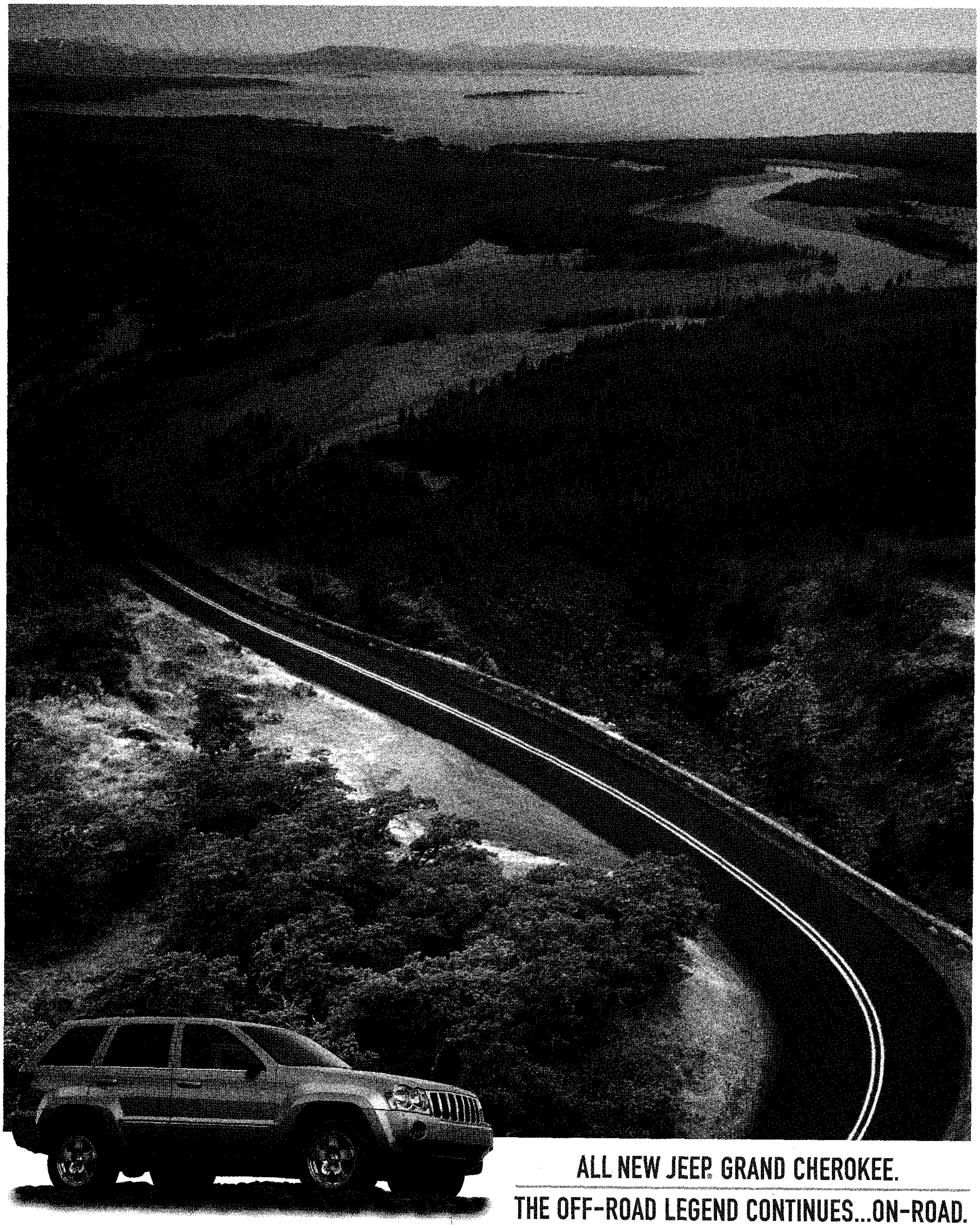
"What about the stars on the roof?"

Granana snorts. "Worm shit!"

"Huh?"

"Worm shit," she repeats. "You never heard of glowworms, Mr. Straight-A Science Guy? Their shit glows in the dark. All them coves are covered with it."

We never recovered Olivia's body. Two days after she went missing, Tropical Storm Vita brought wind and chaos and interrupted broadcasts, and the search was called off. Too dangerous,



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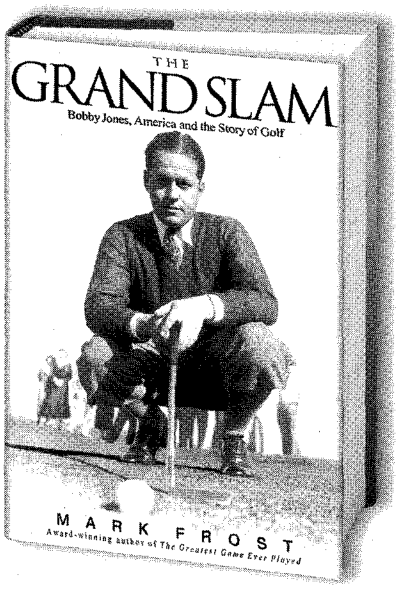
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the Coast Guard lieutenant said. He was a fat, earnest man, with tiny black eyes set like watermelon seeds in his pink face.

"When wind opposes sea," he said in a portentous singsong, "the waves build fast."

"Thank you, Billy Shakespeare," my father growled under his breath. For some reason, this hit Dad the hardest—harder than Olivia's death itself, I think. The fact that we had nothing to bury.

It's possible that Olivia washed up on a bone-white Cojímar beach, or got tangled in some Caribbean fisherman's net. It's probable that her lungs filled up with buckets of tarry black water and she sank. But I don't like to think about that. It's easier to imagine her turning into an angelfish and swimming away, or being bodily assumed into the clouds.

Most likely, Dad says, a freak wave knocked her overboard. Then the current yanked the sled away faster than she could swim. In my night terrors, I watch the sea turn into a great, gloved hand that rises out of the ocean to snatch her. I told Wallow this once, hoping to stir up some fraternal empathy. Instead, Wallow sneered at me.

"Are you serious? That's what you have nightmares about, bro? Some lame-ass Mickey Mouse glove that comes out of the sea?" His lip curled up, but there was envy in his voice, too. "I just see my own hands, you know? Pushing her down that hill."

The following evening, Wallow and I head over to Herb's Crab Sledding Rentals. Herb smokes on his porch in his yellowed boxers and a threadbare Santa hat, rain or shine. Back when we were regular sledders, Wallow always used to razz Herb about his getup.

"Ho ho ho," Herb says reflexively. "Merry Christmas. Sleigh bells ring, are ya listening." He gives a halfhearted shake to a sock full of quarters. "Hang on, nauticats. Can't sled without informed consent."

Thanks to the Olivia Bill, new island legislation requires all island children to take a fourteen-hour Sea Safety! course before they can sled. They have to wear helmets and life preservers, and sign multiple waivers. Herb is dangling the permission form in front of our faces. Wallow accepts it with a genial "Thanks, Herb!" Then he crushes it in his good fist.

"Now wait a sec . . ." Herb scratches his ear. "I, ah, I didn't recognize you boys. I'm sorry, but you know I can't rent to you. Anyhow, it'll be dark soon, and neither one of you is certified."

Wallow walks over to one of the sleds and, unhelmeted, unjacketed, shoves it into the water. The half shell bobs there, one of the sturdier two-seaters, a boiled-red color. He picks up a pair of oars, so that we can row against the riptides. He glares at Herb.

"We are going to take the sled out tonight, and tomorrow night, and every night until our parents get back. We are going to keep taking it out until we find Olivia." He pauses. "And we are going to pay you three hundred and seventy-six dollars in cash." Coincidentally, this is the exact dollar amount of Granana's Social Security check.

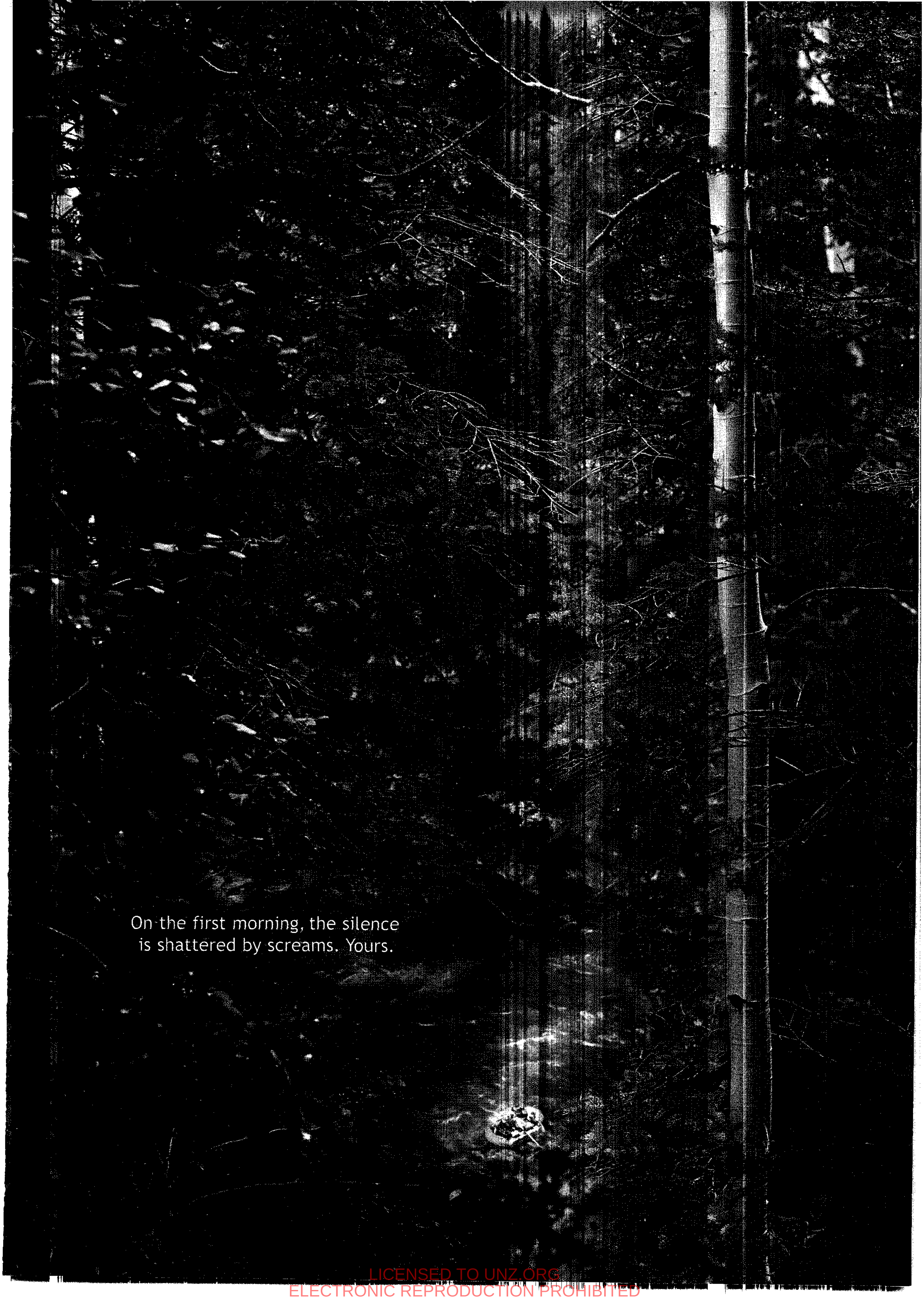
Herb doesn't say a word. He takes the wad of cash, runs a moistened finger through it, and stuffs it under his Santa hat. He waits until we are both in the sled before he opens his mouth.

"Boys," he says. "You have that crab sled back here before dawn. Otherwise, I'm calling the Coast Guard."

Every night, we go a little farther. Out here, you can see dozens of shooting stars, whole galactic herds of them, winking out into cheery oblivion. They make me think of lemmings, flinging themselves over an astral cliff.

We are working our way around the island, with Gannon's Boat Graveyard as our ground zero. I swim parallel to the beach, and Wallow follows along in the crab sled, marking up the shoreline that we've covered on our map. "X" marks all the places where Olivia is not. It's slow going. I'm not a strong swimmer, and I have to paddle back to Wallow every fifteen minutes.

"And just what are we going to do when we find her?" I want to know. It's the third night of our search. We are halfway around the island, on the sandbar near the twinkling lights of the Bowl-a-Bed Hotel. Wallow's face is momentarily illuminated by the cycloptic gaze of the lighthouse. It arcs out over the water, a thin scythe of light that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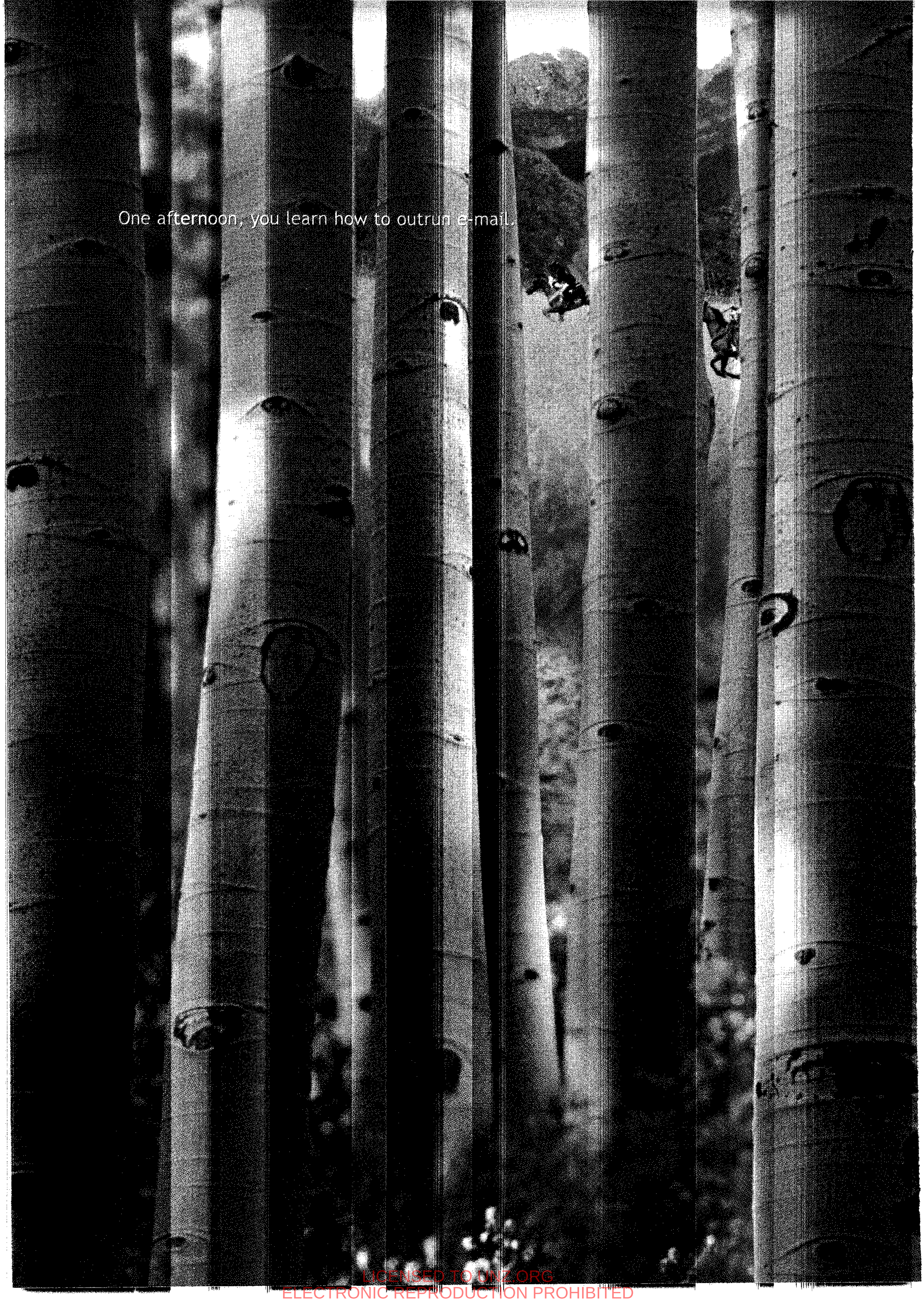
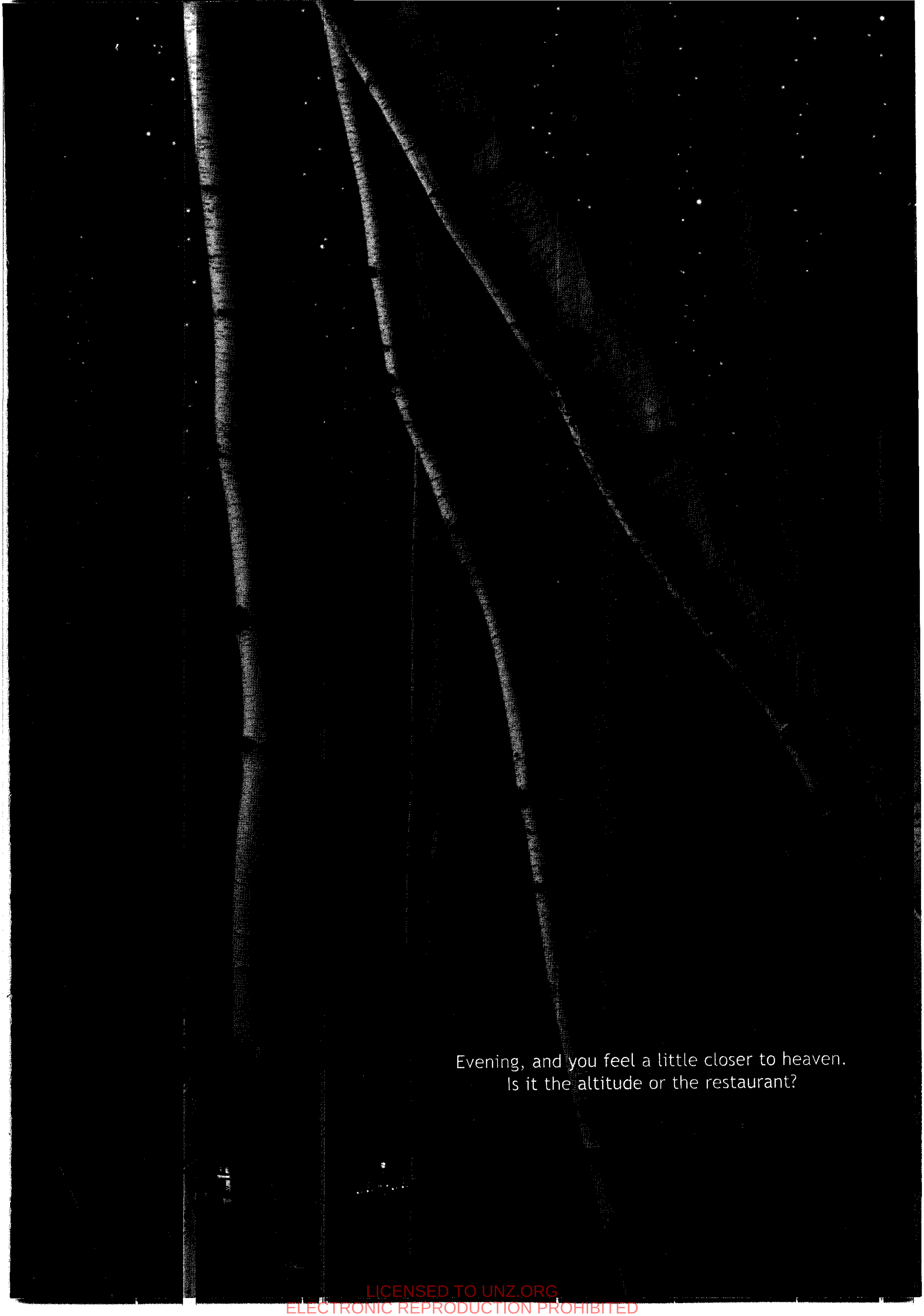

One afternoon, you learn how to outrun e-mail.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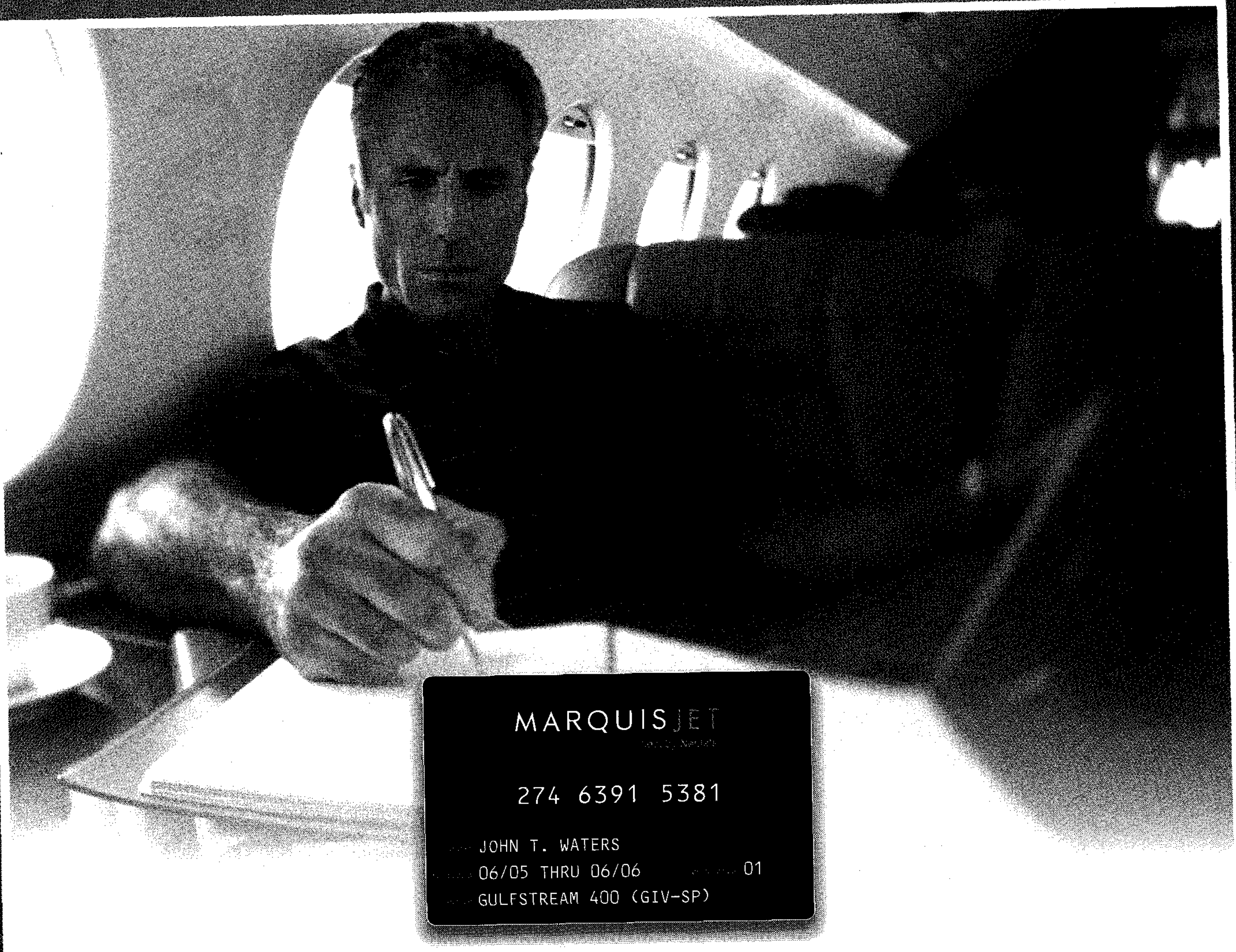

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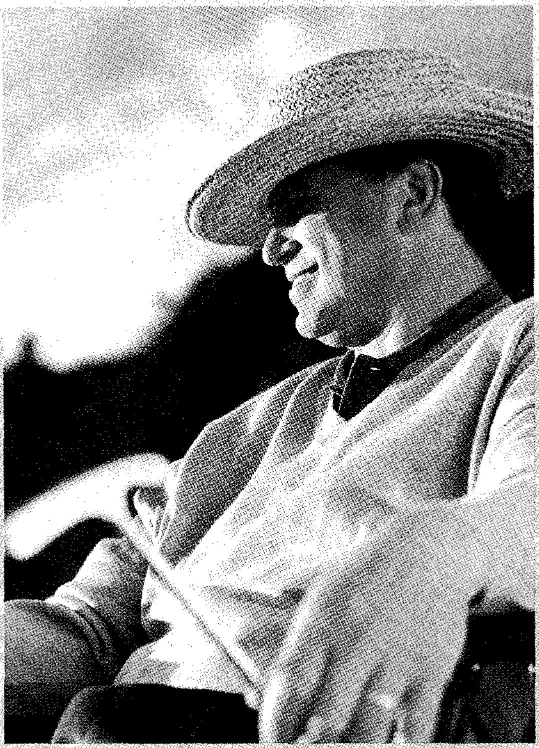

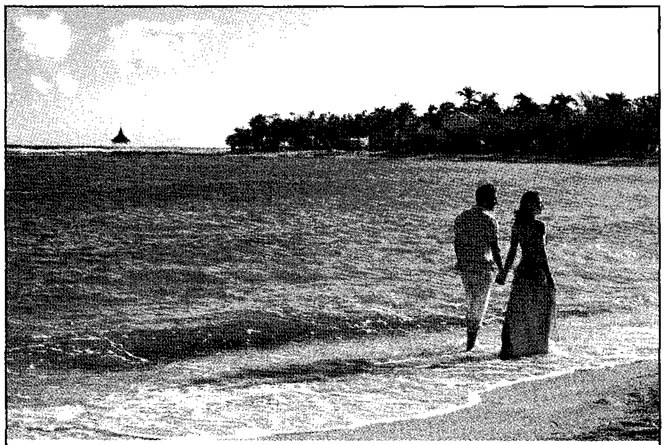

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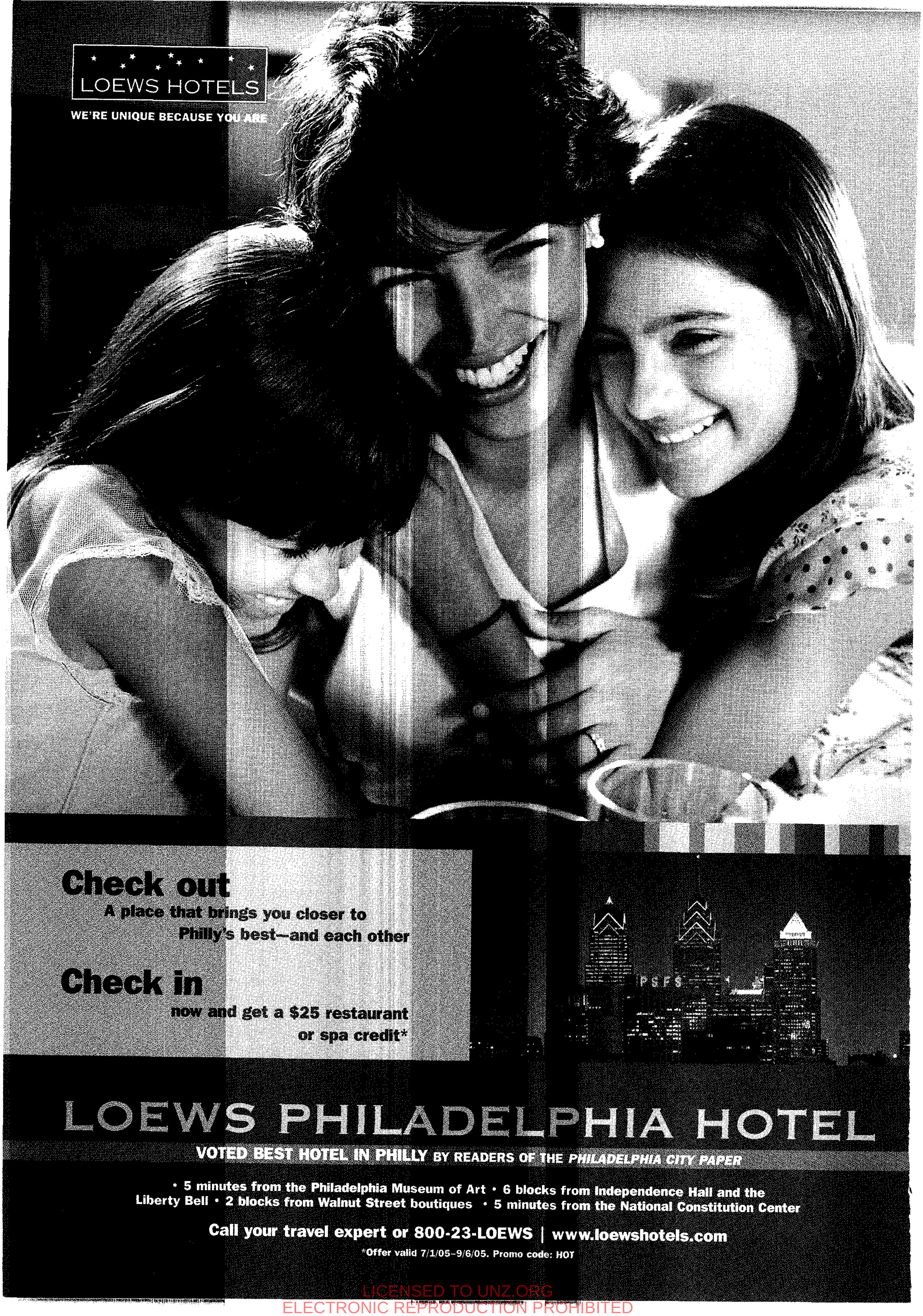

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serves only to make the rest of the ocean look scarier. "What exactly are we going to do with her, Wallow?"

This question has been weighing on my mind more and more heavily of late. Because let's just say, for argument's sake, that there is a Glowworm Grotto, and that Olivia's ghost haunts it. Then what? Do we genie-in-a-bottle her? Keep her company on weekends? I envision eternal Saturday nights spent treading cold water in a cave, crooning lullabies to the husk of Olivia, and shudder.

"What do *you* mean?" Wallow says, frowning. "We'll rescue her. We'll preserve her, uh, you know, her memory."

"And how exactly do you propose we do that?"

"I don't know, bro!" Wallow furrows his brow, flustered. You can tell he hasn't thought much beyond finding Olivia. "We'll—we'll put her in an aquarium."

"An aquarium?" Now it's my turn to be derisive. "And then what? Are you going to get her a kiddie pool?"

It seems to me that nobody's asking the hard questions here. For example, what if ghost-Olivia doesn't have eyes anymore? Or a nose? What if an eel has taken up residence inside her skull, and every time it lights up it sends this unholy electricity radiating through her sockets?

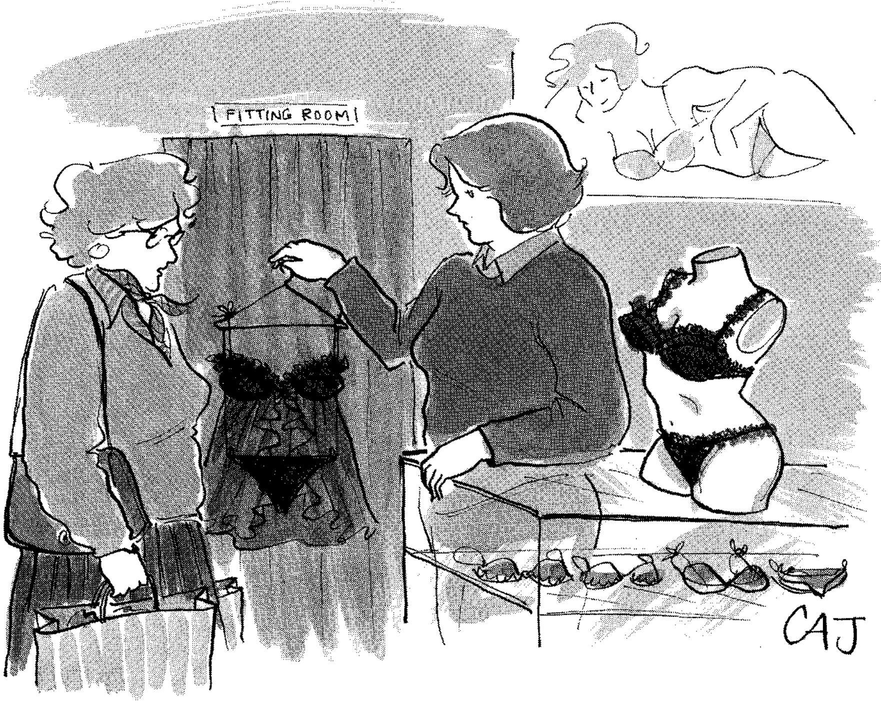
Wallow fixes me with a baleful stare. "Are you pussying out, bro? She's your sister, for Christ's sake. You telling me you're afraid of your own kid sister? Don't worry about what we're going to do with her, bro. We have to find her first."

I say nothing. But I keep thinking: It's been two years. What if all the Olivia-ness has already seeped out of her and evaporated into the violet welter of clouds? Evaporated, and rained down, and evaporated, and rained down. Olivia slicking over all the rivers and trees and dirty cities in the world. So that now there is only silt, and our stupid, salt-diluted longing. And nothing left of our sister to find.

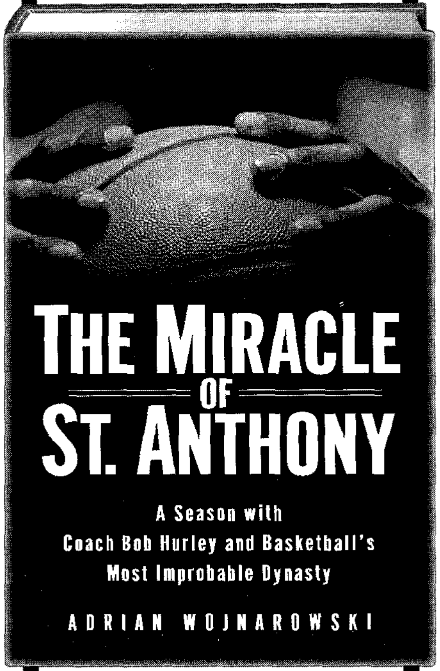
On the fourth night of our search, I see a churning clump of ghost children. They are drifting straight for me, all kelped together, an eyeless panic of legs and feet and hair. I kick for the surface, heart hammering.

"Wallow!" I scream, hurling myself at the crab sled. "I just saw—I just—I'm not doing this anymore, bro, I am *not.* You can go stick your face in dead kids for a change. Let Olivia come find us."

"Calm it down." Wallow pokes at the ocean with his oar. "It's only trash." He fishes out a nasty mass of diapers



"I'm looking for something less empowering."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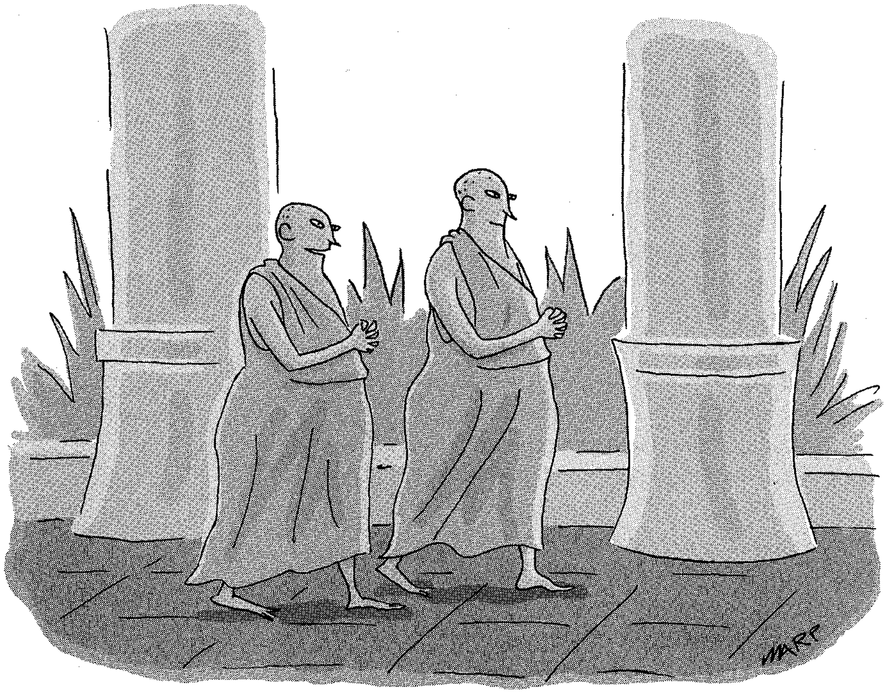

"I am so past enlightenment."

• •

and chicken gristle and whiskery red seaweed, all threaded around the plastic rings of a six-pack. "See?"

I sit huddled in the corner of the sled, staring dully at the blank surface of the water. I know what I saw.

The goggles are starting to feel less like a superpower and more like a divine punishment, one of those particularly inventive cruelties that you read about in Greek mythology. Every now and then, I think about how much simpler and more pleasant things would be if the goggles conferred a different kind of vision. Like if I could read messages written in squid ink, or laser through the Brazilian girls' tankinis. But then Wallow interrupts these thoughts by dunking me under the water. Repeatedly.

"Keep looking," he snarls, water dripping off his face.

On the fifth night of our search, I see a plesiosaur. It is a megawatt behemoth, bronze and blue-white, streaking across the sea floor like a torpid comet. Watching it, I get this primordial déjà vu, like I'm watching a dream return to my body. It wings toward me with a slow, avian grace. Its long neck is arced in an S-shaped curve; its lizard body is the size of Granana's carport. Each of its ghost flippers pinwheels colored light. I try to swim out of its path, but the thing's too big to avoid. That Leviathan fin, it shivers right through me. It's a light in my belly, cold and familiar. And I flash back to a snippet from school, a line from a poem or a science book, I can't remember which:

There are certain prehistoric things that swim beyond extinction.

I wake up from one of those naps which leach the strength from your bones to a lightning storm. I must have fallen asleep in the crab sled. Otherworldly light goes roiling through an eerie blue froth of clouds.

Wallow is standing at the prow of the sled. Each flash of lightning limns his bared teeth, the hollows of his eyes. It's as if somebody up there were taking an X-ray of grief, again and again.

"I just want to tell her that I'm sorry," Wallow says softly. He doesn't know that I'm awake. He's talking to himself, or maybe to the ocean. There's not a trace of fear in his voice. And it's clear then that Wallow is a better brother than I could ever hope to be.

We have rowed almost all the way around the island. In a quarter of an hour, we'll be back at Gannon's Boat Graveyard. Thank merciful Christ. Our parents are coming back tomorrow, and I can go back to playing video games and feeling dry and blameless.

Then the lighthouse beacon sweeps out again. It bounces off an outcropping of rocks that we didn't notice on our first expedition. White sequins of light pop along the water.

"Did you see that? That's it!" Wallow says excitedly. "That's gotta be it!"

"Oh. Excellent."

We paddle the rest of the way out in silence. I row the crab sled like a condemned man. The current keeps pushing us back, but we make a quiet kind of progress. I keep praying that the crags will turn out to be low, heaped clouds, or else a seamless mass of stone. Instead, you can tell that they are pocked with dozens of holes. For a second, I'm relieved—nobody, not even string-beany Olivia, could swim into such narrow openings. Wallow's eyes dart around wildly.

"There has to be an entrance," he mutters. "Look!"

Sure enough, there is a muted glow coming from the far end of a salt-eaten overhang, like light from under a door.

"No way can I fit through there," I gasp, knowing immediately that I can. And that the crab sled can't, of course. Which means I'll be going in to meet her alone.

What if the light, I am thinking, is Olivia?

"It's just worms, bro," Wallow says, as if reading my mind. But there's this inscrutable sadness on his face. His muddy eyes swallow up the light and give nothing back.

I look over my shoulder. We're less than half a mile out from shore, could skip a stone to the mangrove islets; and yet the land draws back like a fat swimmer's chimera, impossibly far away.

"Ready?" He grabs at the scruff of my neck and pushes me toward the water. "Set?"

"No!" Staring at the unlit spaces in the crags, I am choked with horror. I fumble the goggles off my face. "Do your own detective work!" I dangle the

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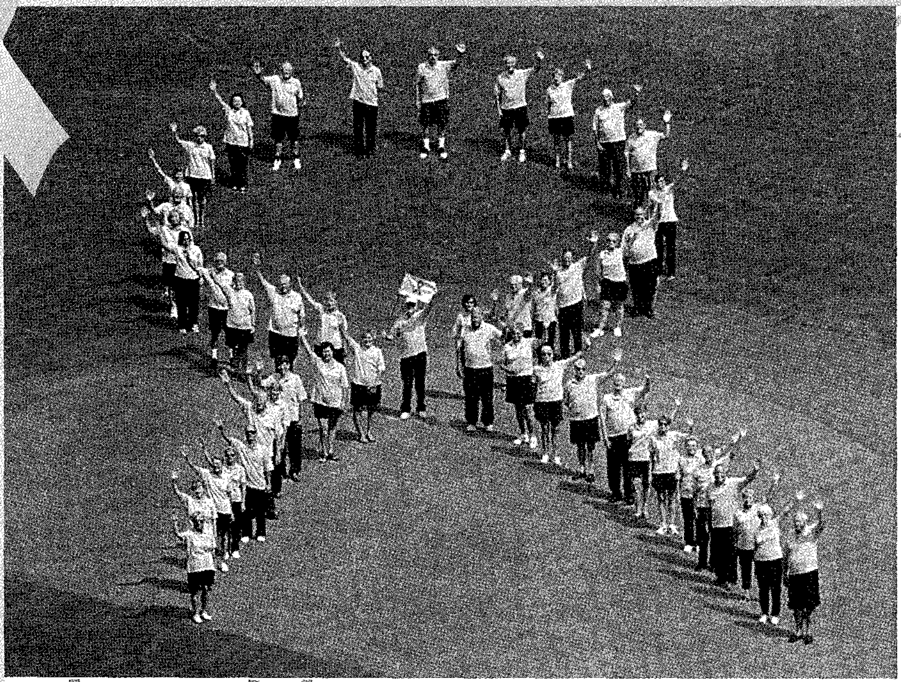

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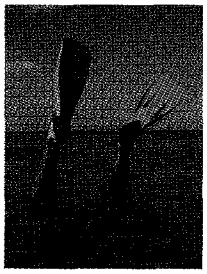
[Explore] *Jamaica*

LOCAL STOPS ON THE SLOW COAST



The road less traveled leads east of Negril and west of Kingston to the South Coast, a region of Jamaican fishing and farming villages largely undisturbed by tourism. The enduring attractions are those of uncommon geology, rare biodiversity, and low-key communities. Until Sandals opened a lavish retreat this year, there wasn't a single resort of this size to be found.

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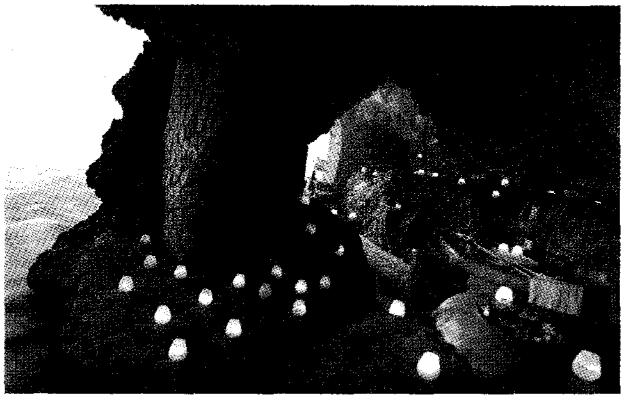

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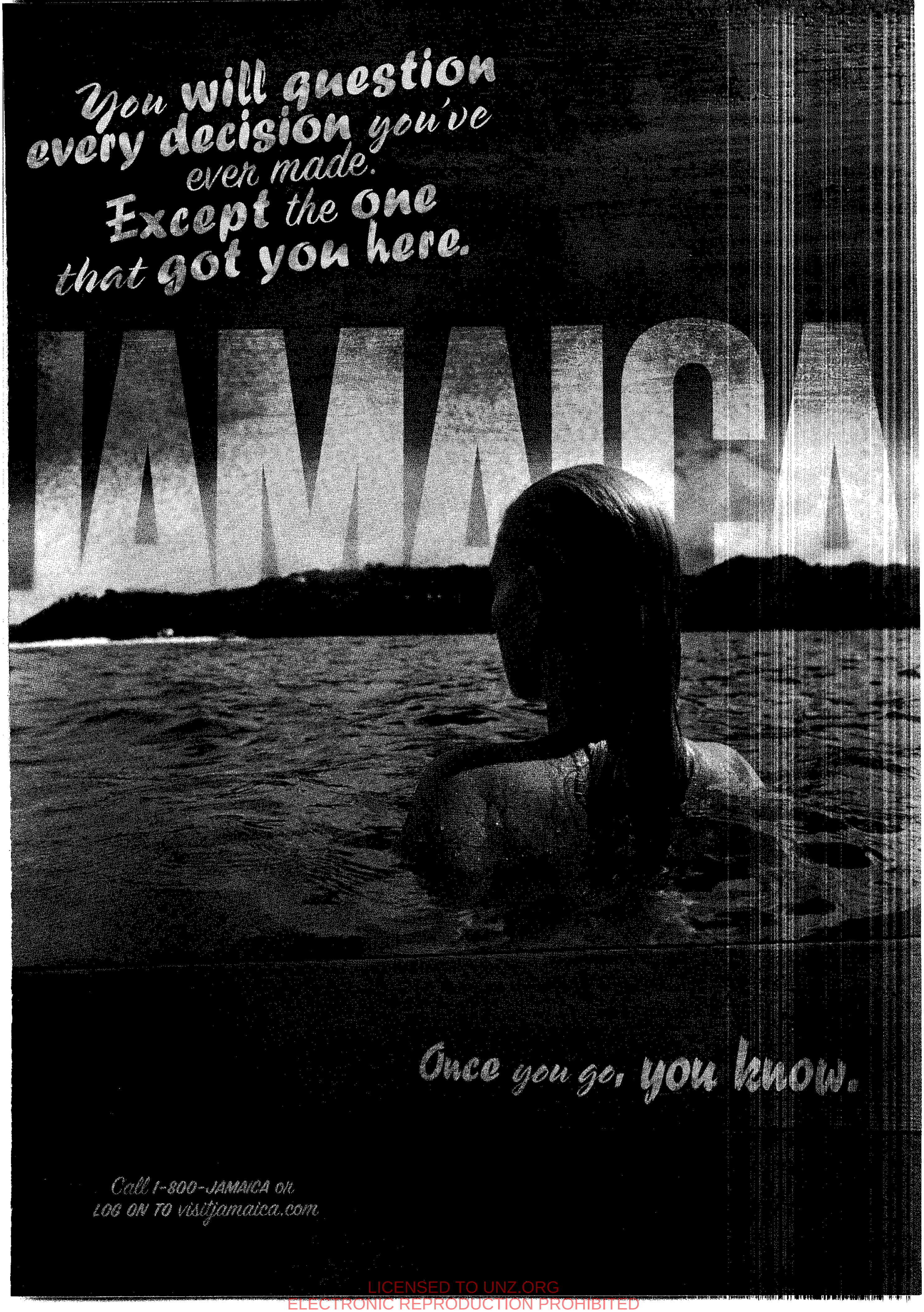
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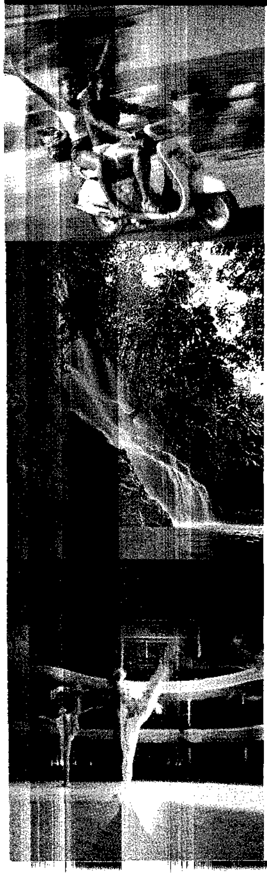

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Once you go, you know.

goggles over the edge of the sled. "I quit."

Wallow lunges forward and pins me against the side of the boat. He tries to spatula me overboard with his one good arm, but I limbo under his cast.

"Don't do it, Timothy," he cautions, but it is too late.

"This is what I think of your diabolical goggles!" I howl. I hoist the goggles over my head and, with all the force in my puny arms, hurl them to the floor of the crab sled.

This proves to be pretty anticlimactic. Naturally, the goggles remain intact. There's not even a hairline fracture. Stupid scratchproof lenses.

The worst part is that Wallow just watches me impassively, his cast held aloft in the air, as if he were patiently waiting to ask the universe a question. He nudges the goggles toward me with his foot.

"You finished?"

"Wally!" I blubber, a last-ditch plea. "This is crazy. What if something happens to me in there and you can't come in after me? Let's go back."

"What?" Wallow barks, disgusted. "And leave Olivia here for dead? Is that what you want?"

"Bingo!" That is exactly what I want. Maybe Granana is slightly off target when it comes to the Food Pyramid, but she has the right idea about death. I want my parents to stop sailing around taking pictures of Sudanese leper colonies. I want Wallow to row back to shore and sleep through the night. I want everybody in the goddam family to leave Olivia here for dead.

But there's my brother. Struggling with his own repugnance, like an entomologist who has just discovered a loathsome new species of beetle. "What did you say?"

"I said I'll go," I mumble, not meeting his eyes. I position myself on the edge of the boat. "I'll go." So that's what it comes down to, then. I'd rather drown in Olivia's ghost than have him look at me that way.

To enter the grotto, you have to slide in on your back, like a letter through a mail slot. Something scrapes my coccyx bone on the way in. There's a polar chill in the water tonight. No outside light can wiggle its way inside.

But, sure enough, phosphorescent dots spangle the domed roof of the grotto. It's like a radiant checkerboard of shit. You can't impose any mental pictures on it—it's too uniform. It defies the mind's desire to constellate randomness. The Glowworm Grotto is nothing like the night sky. The stars here are all equally bright and evenly spaced, like a better-ordered cosmos.

"Olivia?"

The grotto smells like salt and blood and bat shit. Shadows web the walls. I try and fail to touch the bottom.

"Oliviaaa?"

Her name echoes around the cave. After a while, there is only rippled water again, and the gonged absence of sound. Ten more minutes, I think. I could splash around here for ten more minutes and be done with this. I could take off the goggles, even. I could leave without ever looking below the surface of the water, and Wallow would never know.

"Oli—"

I take a deep breath, and dive.

Below me, tiny fish are rising out of golden cylinders of coral. It looks like an undersea calliope, piping a song that you can see instead of hear. One of the fish swims right up and taps against my scratchproof lenses. It's just a regular blue fish, solid and alive. It taps and taps, oblivious of the thick glass. My eyes cross, trying to keep it in focus.

The fish swims off to the beat of some subaqueous music. Everything down here is dancing—the worms' green light and the undulant walls and the leopard-spotted polyps. Everything. And following this fish is like trying to work backward from the dance to the song. I can't hear it, though; I can't remember a single note of it. It fills me with a hitching sort of sadness.

I trail the fish at an embarrassed distance, feeling warm-blooded and ridiculous in my rubbery flippers, marooned in this clumsy body. Like I'm an impostor, an imperfect monster.

I look for my sister, but it's hopeless. The goggles are all fogged up. Every fish burns lantern-bright, and I can't tell the living from the dead. It's all just blurry light, light smeared like some celestial fingerprint all over the rocks and the reef and the sunken garbage. Olivia could be everywhere. ♦

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When it's time to change your seat.

BY DAVID SEDARIS

On the flight to Raleigh, I sneezed, and the cough drop I'd been sucking on shot from my mouth, ricocheted off my folded tray table, and landed, as I remember it, in the lap of the woman beside me, who was asleep and had her arms folded across her chest. I'm surprised that the force didn't wake her—that's how hard it hit—but all she did was flutter her eyelids and let out a tiny sigh, the kind you might hear from a baby.

Under normal circumstances, I'd have had three choices, the first being to do nothing. The woman would wake up in her own time, and notice what looked like a shiny new button sewn to the crotch of her jeans. This was a small plane, with one seat per row on Aisle A, and two seats per row on Aisle B. We were on B, so should she go searching for answers I would be the first person on her list. "Is this yours?" she'd ask, and I'd look dumbly into her lap.

"Is what mine?"

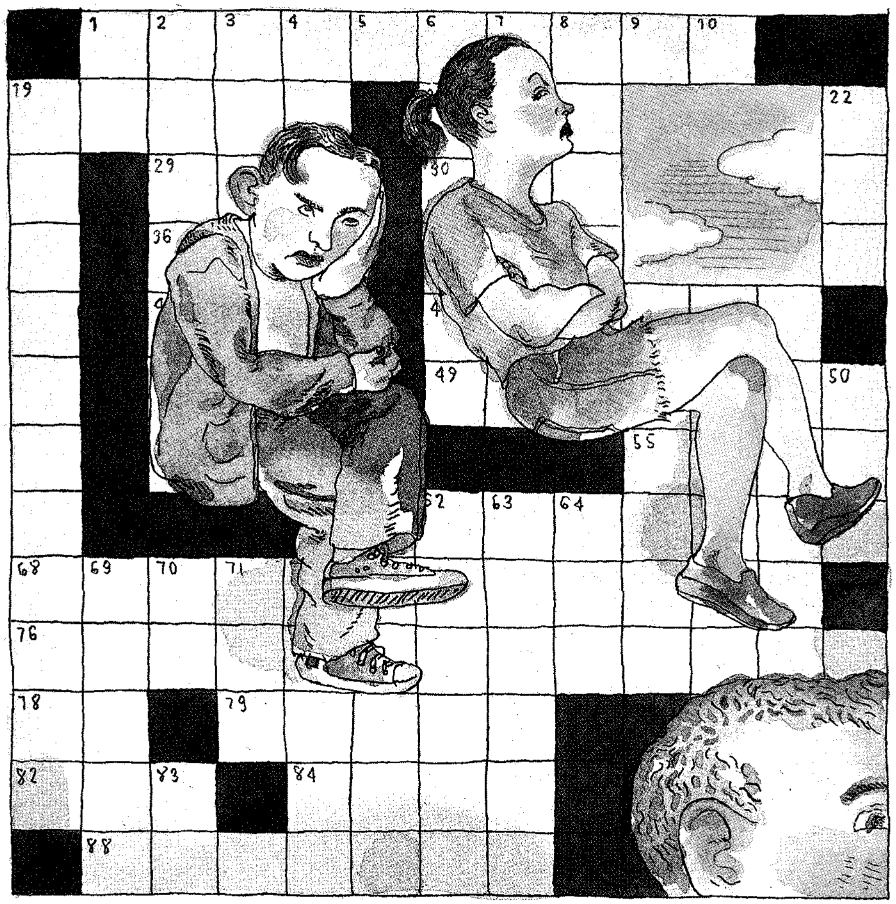
Option No. 2 was to reach over and pluck it from her pants, and No. 3 was to wake her up and turn the tables, saying, "I'm sorry, but I think you have something that belongs to me." Then she'd hand the lozenge back and maybe even apologize, confused into thinking that she'd somehow stolen it.

These circumstances, however, were not normal, as before she'd fallen asleep the woman and I had had a fight. I'd known her for only an hour, yet I felt her hatred just as strongly as I felt the stream of cold air blowing into my face—this after she'd repositioned the nozzle above her head, a final fuck-you before settling down for her nap.

The odd thing was that she hadn't looked like trouble. I'd stood behind her while boarding and she was just this woman—forty at most—wearing a T-shirt and cutoff jeans. Her hair was brown, and fell to her shoulders, and as we waited she gathered it into a ponytail and fastened it with an elastic band. There was a man beside her, who was around the same age and was also wearing shorts, though his were hemmed. He was skimming through a golf magazine, and I guessed correctly that the two of them were embarking on a vacation. While on the gangway, the woman mentioned a rental car, and wondered if the beach cottage was far from a grocery store. She was clearly looking forward to her trip, and I found myself hoping that, whichever beach they were going to, the grocery store wouldn't be too far away. It was just one of those things that go through your mind. *Best of luck,* I thought.

Once on board, I realized that the woman and I would be sitting next to one another, which was fine. I took my place on the aisle, and within a minute she excused herself and walked a few rows up to talk to the man with the golf magazine. He was at the front of the cabin, in a single bulkhead seat, and I recall feeling sorry for him, because I hate the bulkhead. Tall people covet it, but I prefer as little leg room as possible. When I'm on a plane or in a movie theatre, I like to slouch down as low as I can, and rest my knees on the seat back in front of me. In the bulkhead, there is no seat in front of you, just a wall a good three feet away, and I never know what to do with my legs. Another drawback is that you have to stow all of your belongings in the overhead compartment, and these are usually full by the time I board. All in all, I'd rather hang from one of the wheels than have to sit up front.

When they announced our departure, the woman returned to her seat, and hovered a half foot off the cushion, so she could continue her conversation with the man she'd been talking to ear-



After an argument with a fellow-passenger, it helps to turn to Saturday's puzzle.

BARRY BLITT

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lier. I wasn't paying attention to what they were saying, but I believe I heard him refer to her as Becky, a wholesome name that matched her contagious, almost childlike enthusiasm.

The plane took off and everything was as it should be until the woman touched my arm, and pointed to the man she'd been talking to earlier. "Hey," she said, "see that guy up there?" Then she called out his name—Eric, I think—and the man turned and waved. "That's my husband, see, and I'm wondering if you could maybe swap seats so that me and him could sit together."

"Well, actually—" I said, and before I could finish her face hardened, and she interrupted me, saying, "What? You have a *problem* with that?"

"Well," I said, "ordinarily I'd be happy to move, but he's in the bulkhead, and I just hate that seat."

"He's in the *what*?"

"The bulkhead," I explained. "That's what you call that front row."

"Listen," she said, "I'm not asking you to switch because it's a bad seat. I'm asking you to switch because we're married." She pointed to her wedding ring, and when I leaned in closer to get a better look at it she drew back her hand, saying, "Oh, never mind. Just forget it."

It was as if she had slammed a door in my face, and quite unfairly, it seemed to me. I should have left well enough alone, but instead I tried to reason with her. "It's only a ninety-minute flight," I said, suggesting that in the great scheme of things it wasn't that long to be separated from your husband. "I mean, what, is he going to prison the moment we land in Raleigh?"

"No, he's not going to *prison,*" she said, and on the last word she lifted her voice, mocking me.

"Look," I told her, "if he was a child I'd do it." And she cut me off saying, "Whatever." Then she rolled her eyes and glared out the window.

The woman had decided that I was a hard-ass, one of those guys who refuse under any circumstances to do anyone a favor. But it's not true. I just prefer that the favor be my idea, that it leaves me feeling kind rather than bullied and uncomfortable. *So, no. Let her sulk,* I decided.

Eric had stopped waving, and signalled for me to get Becky's attention. "My wife," he mouthed. "Get my wife."

There was no way out, and so I tapped the woman on the shoulder.

"Don't touch me," she said, as if I had thrown a punch.

"Your husband wants you."

"Well, that doesn't give you the right to *touch* me." Becky unbuckled her seat belt, raised herself off the cushion, and spoke to Eric in a loud stage whisper: "I asked him to swap seats, but he won't do it."

He cocked his head, sign language for "How come?," and she said, much louder than she needed to, " 'Cause he's an *asshole*, that's why."

An elderly woman across the aisle turned to look at me, and I pulled a *Times* crossword puzzle from the bag beneath my seat. That always makes you look reasonable, especially on a Saturday, when the words are long and the clues are exceptionally tough. The problem is that you have to concentrate, and all I could think of was this woman.

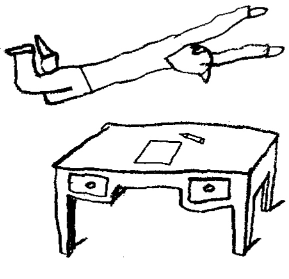
Seventeen across. A fifteen-letter word for enlightenment. "I am not an asshole," I wrote, and it fit.

Five down. Six-letter Indian tribe. "You are."

Look at the smart man, breezing through the puzzle, I imagined everyone thinking. He must be a genius. That's why he wouldn't swap seats for that poor married woman. He knows something we don't.

It's pathetic how much significance I attach to the *Times* puzzle, which is easy on Monday and gets progressively harder as the week advances. I'll spend fourteen hours finishing the Friday, and then I'll wave it in someone's face and demand that they acknowledge my superior intelligence. I think it means that I'm smarter than the next guy, but all it really means is that I don't have a life.

As I turned to my puzzle, Becky reached for a paperback novel, the kind with an embossed cover. I strained to see what the title was, and she jerked it closer to the window. Strange how that happens, how you can feel someone's eyes on your book or magazine as surely as you can feel a touch. It only works for the written word, though. I stared at her feet for a good five minutes, and she never jerked those away. After our fight, she'd removed her sneakers, and I saw that her toenails were painted white, and that each one was perfectly sculpted.



Eighteen across: "Not impressed."

Eleven down: "Whore."

I wasn't even looking at the clues anymore.

When the drink cart came, we fought through the flight attendant.

"What can I offer you folks?" she asked, and Becky threw down her book saying, "We're not together." It killed her that we might be mistaken for a couple, or even friends. "I'm travelling with my husband," she continued. "He's sitting up there. In *the bulkhead.*"

You learned that word from me, I thought.

"Well, can I offer—"

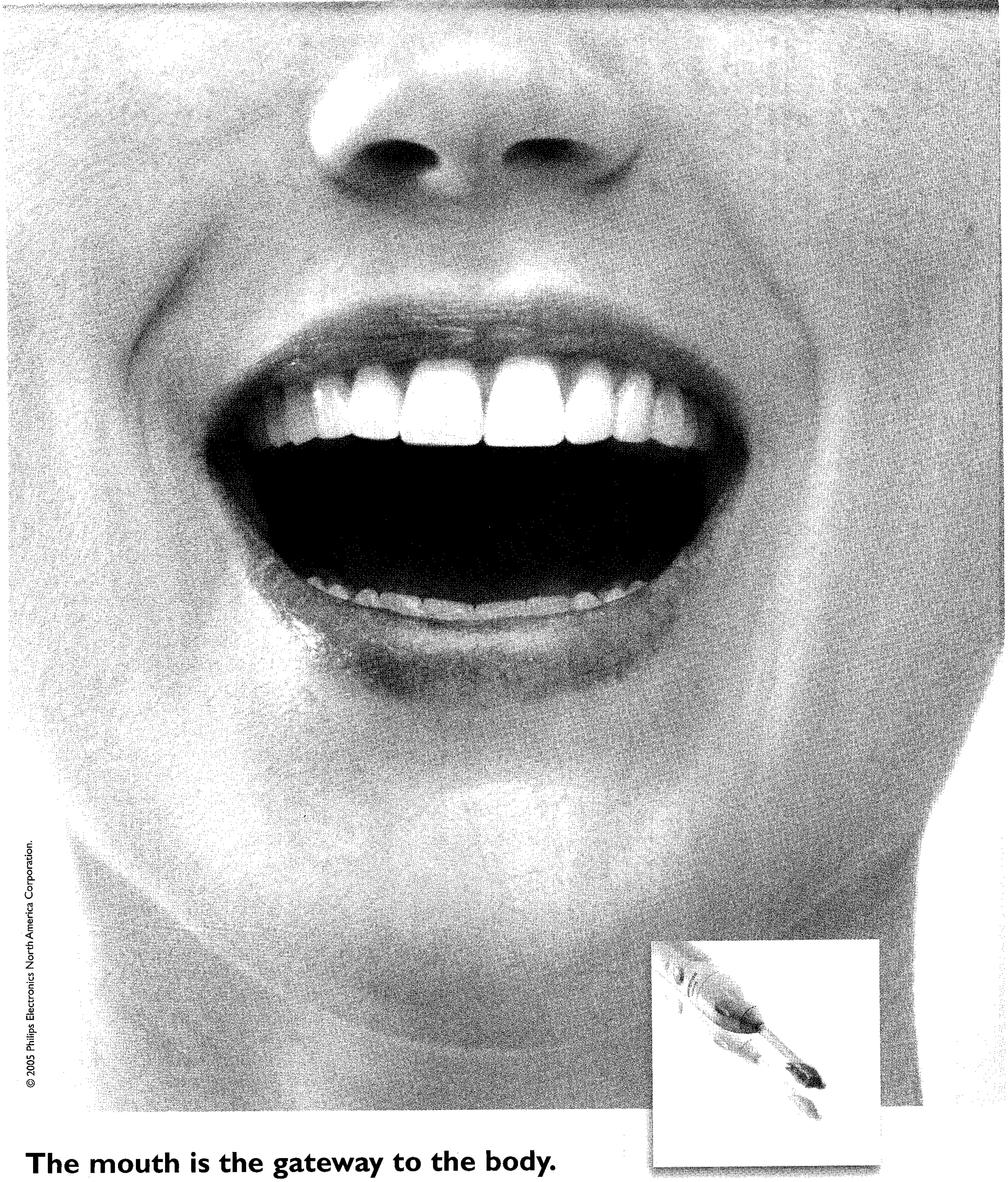
"I'll have a Coke," Becky said. "Not much ice."

I was thirsty, too, but more than a drink I wanted the flight attendant to like me. And who would you prefer, the finicky baby who cuts you off and gets all specific about her ice cubes, or the thoughtful, nondemanding gentleman who smiles up from his difficult Saturday puzzle saying, "Nothing for me, thank you"?

Were the plane to lose altitude and the only way to stay aloft was to push one person out the emergency exit, I now felt certain that the flight attendant would select Becky rather than me. I pictured her clinging to the door frame, her hair blown so hard it was starting to fall out. "But my husband—" she'd cry. Then I would step forward saying, "Hey, I've been to Raleigh before. Take me instead." Becky would see that I am not the asshole she mistook me for, and in that instant she would lose her grip, and be sucked into space.

Two down: "Take that!"

It's always so satisfying when you can twist someone's hatred into guilt—make them realize that they were wrong, too quick to judge, too unwilling to look beyond their own petty concerns. The problem is that it works both ways. I'd



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taken this woman as the type who arrives late at a movie, then asks me to move behind the tallest person in the theatre so that she and her husband can sit together. Everyone has to suffer just because she's sleeping with someone. But what if I was wrong? I pictured her in a dimly lit room, trembling before a portfolio of glowing X-rays. "I give you two weeks at the most," the doctor says. "Why don't you get your toenails done, buy yourself a nice pair of cutoffs, and spend some quality time with your husband. I hear the beaches of North Carolina are pretty nice this time of year."

I looked at her then, and thought, *No.* If she'd had so much as a stomach ache, she would have mentioned it. Or would she? I kept telling myself that I was within my rights, but I knew it wasn't working when I turned back to my puzzle and started listing the various reasons I was not an asshole

Forty across: "I give money to p—"

Forty-six down: "—ublic radio."

While groping for reason No. 2, I noticed that Becky was not making a list of her own. She was the one who had called me a name, who had gone out of her way to stir up trouble, but it didn't seem to bother her in the least. After finishing her Coke, she folded up the tray table, summoned the flight attendant to take her empty can, and settled back for a nap. It was shortly afterward that I put the throat lozenge in my mouth, and shortly after that that I sneezed, and it shot like a bullet onto the crotch of her shorts.

Nine across: "Fuck!"

Thirteen down: "Now what?"

It was then that another option occurred to me. *You know,* I thought. *Maybe I will swap places with her husband.* But I'd waited too long, and now he was asleep as well. My only way out was to nudge this woman awake, and make the same offer I sometimes make to Hugh. We'll be arguing, and I'll stop in mid-sentence and ask if we can just start over. "I'll go outside and when I come back in we'll just pretend this never happened, O.K.?"

If the fight is huge, he'll wait until I'm in the hall, then bolt the door behind me, but if it's minor he'll go along, and I'll reënter the apartment saying, "What are you doing home?" Or "Gee, it smells good in here. What's cooking?"—an easy question, as he's always got something on the stove.

For a while, it feels goofy, but eventually the self-consciousness wears off, and we ease into the roles of two decent people, trapped in a rather dull play. "Is there anything I can do to help?"

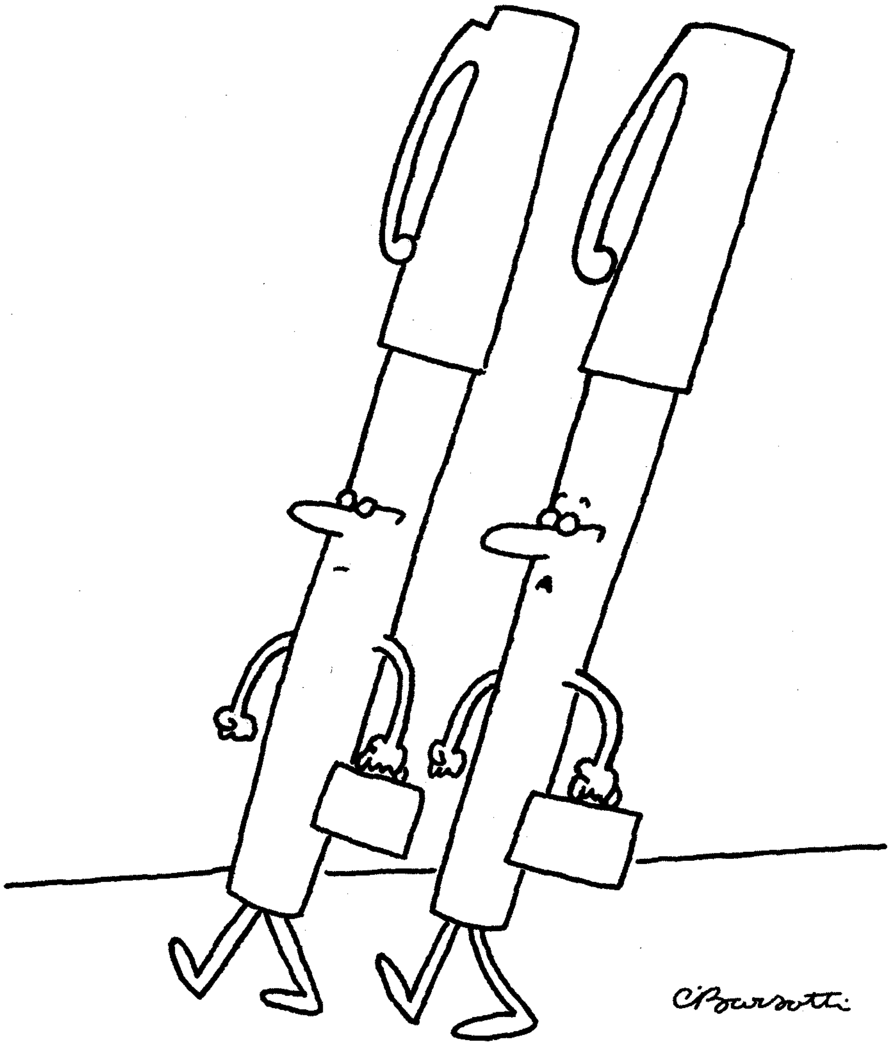
"You can set the table if you want."

"All-righty then."

I don't know how many times I've set the table in the middle of the afternoon, long before we sit down to eat. But the play would be all the duller without action, and I don't want to do anything really hard, like paint a room. I'm just so grateful that he goes along with it. Other people's lives can be full of screaming and flying plates, but I prefer that my own remains as civil as possible, even if it means faking it every once in a while.

I'd gladly have started over with Becky, but something told me she wouldn't go for it. Even asleep, she broadcast her hostility, each gentle snore sounding like an accusation. *Ass-hole. Ass-ho-ole.* The landing announcement failed to wake her, and when the flight attendant asked her to fasten her seat belt she did it in a drowse, without looking. The lozenge disappeared beneath the buckle, and this bought me an extra ten minutes, time spent gathering my things, so that I could make for the door the moment we arrived at our gate. I just didn't count on the man in front of me being a little bit quicker, and holding me up as he wrestled his duffelbag from the overhead bin. Had it not been for him, I might have been gone by the time Becky unfastened her seat belt, but as it was I was only four rows away, standing, as it turned out, right beside the bulkhead.

The name she called me was nothing I hadn't heard before, and nothing that I won't hear again, probably. Eight letters, and the clue might read, "Above the shoulders, he's nothing but crap." Of course, they don't put words like that in the *Times* crossword puzzle. If they did, anyone could finish it. ♦



"Well, if doodling all day is busy, I was busy."

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AN EX-MAS FEAST

BY UWEM AKPAN

Now that my eldest sister, Maisha, was twelve, none of us knew how to relate to her anymore. She had never forgiven our parents for not being rich enough to send her to school. She had been behaving like a cat that was going feral: she came home less and less frequently, staying only to change her clothes and give me some money to pass on to our parents. When home, she avoided them as best she could, as if their presence reminded her of too many things in our lives that needed money. Though she would snap at Baba occasionally, she never said anything to Mama. Sometimes Mama went out of her way to provoke her. "*Malaya!* Whore! You don't even have breasts yet!" she'd say. Maisha would ignore her.

Maisha shared her thoughts with Naema, our ten-year-old sister, more than she did with all the rest of us combined, mostly talking about the dos and don'ts of a street girl. Maisha let Naema try on her high heels, showed her how to doll up her face, or how to use toothpaste and a brush. She told her to run away from any man who beat her, no matter how much money he offered her, and that she would treat Naema like Mama if she grew up to have too many children. She told Naema that it was better to starve to death than go out with any man without a condom.

When she was at work, though, she ignored Naema, perhaps because Naema reminded her of home or because she didn't want Naema to see that her big sister wasn't as cool and chic as she made out to be. She tolerated me more outside than inside. I could chat her up on the pavement no matter what rags I was wearing. An eight-year-old boy wouldn't get in the way when she was waiting for a customer. We knew how to pretend that we were strangers—just a street kid and a prostitute talking.

Yet our *machokosh* family was lucky. Unlike most, our street family had stayed together—at least until that Ex-mas season.

The sun had gone down on Ex-mas evening. Bad weather had stormed the seasons out of order, and Nairobi sat in a low flood, the light December rain droning on our tarpaulin roof. I was sitting on the floor of our shack, which stood on a cement slab at the end of an alley, leaning against the back of an old brick shop. Occasional winds swelled the brown polythene walls. The floor was nested with cushions that I had scavenged from a dump on Biashara Street. At night, we rolled up the edge of the tarpaulin to let in the glow of the shop's security lights. A board, which served as our door, lay by the shop wall.

A clap of thunder woke Mama. She got up sluggishly, pulling her hands away from Maisha's trunk box, which she had held on to while she slept. It was a navy-blue trunk with brass linings and rollers and it took up a good part of our living space. Panicking, Mama groped her way from wall to wall, frisking my two-year-old twin brother and sister, Otieno and Atieno, and Baba; all three were sleeping, tangled up together like puppies. She was looking for Baby. Mama's white T-shirt, which she had been given three months back, when she delivered Baby, had twin milk stains on the front. Then she must have remembered that he was with Maisha and Naema. She relaxed and stretched in a yawn, hitting a rafter of cork. One of the stones that weighted our roof fell down outside.

Now Mama put her hands under her *shuka* and retied the strings of the money purse around her waist; sleep and alcohol had swung it out of place. She dug through our family carton, scooping out clothes, shoes, and my new school uniform wrapped in useless documents that Baba had picked from people's pockets. Mama dug on, and the contents of the carton piled up on Baba and the

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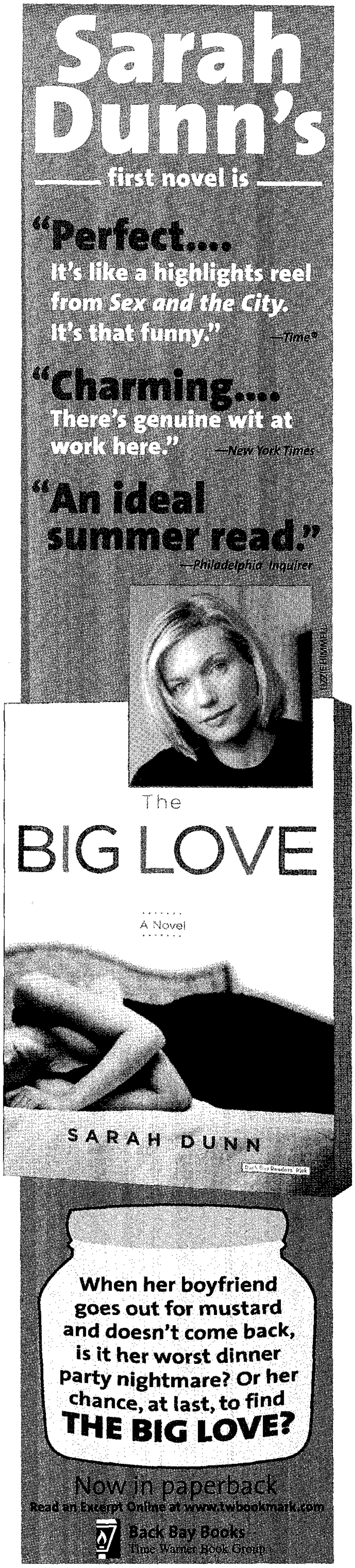

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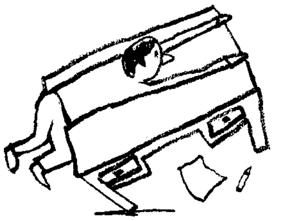
twins. Then she unearthed a tin of New Suntan Shoe Glue. The glue was our Ex-mas gift from the children of a *machokosh* that lived nearby.

Mama smiled at the glue and winked at me, pushing her tongue through the holes left by her missing teeth. She snapped the tin's top expertly, and the shack swelled with the smell of a shoemaker's stall. I watched her decant the *kabire* into my plastic "feeding bottle." It glowed warm and yellow in the dull light. Though she still appeared drunk from last night's party, her hands were so steady that her large tinsel Ex-mas bangles, a gift from a church Ex-mas party, did not even sway. When she had poured enough, she cut the flow of the glue by tilting the tin up. The last stream of the gum entering the bottle weakened and braided itself before tapering in midair like an icicle. She covered the plastic with her palm, to retain the glue's power. Sniffing it would kill my hunger in case Maisha did not return with an Ex-mas feast for us.

Mama turned to Baba, shoving his body with her foot. "Wake up, you never work for days!" Baba turned and groaned. His feet were poking outside the shack, under the waterproof wall. His toes had broken free of his wet tennis shoes. Mama shoved him again, and he began to wriggle his legs as if he were walking in his sleep.

Our dog growled outside. Mama snapped her fingers, and the dog came in, her ripe pregnancy swaying like heavy washing in the wind. For a month and a half, Mama, who was good at spotting dog pregnancies, had baited her with tenderness and food till she became ours; Mama hoped to sell the puppies to raise money for my textbooks. Now the dog came inside and licked Atieno's face. Mama probed her stomach with crooked fingers, like a native midwife. "Oh, Simba, childbirth is chasing you," she whispered into the dog's ears. "Like school is chasing my son." She pushed the dog outside. Simba lay down, covering Baba's feet with her warmth. Occasionally, she barked to keep the other dogs from tampering with our mobile kitchen, which was leaning against the wall of the store.



"Jigana, did you do well last night with Baby?" Mama asked me suddenly.

"I made a bit," I assured her, and passed her a handful of coins and notes. She pushed the money under her *shuka;* the zip of the purse released two crisp farts.

Though people were more generous to beggars at Ex-mas, our real bait was Baby. We took turns pushing him in the faces of passersby.

"*Aii!* Son, you never see Ex-mas like this year." Her face widened in a grin. "We shall pay school fees next year. No more *randa*-meandering around. No more *chomaring* your brain with glue, boy. You going back to school! Did the rain beat you and Baby?"

"Rain caught me here," I said.

"And Baby? Who is carrying him?"

"Naema," I said.

"And Maisha? Where is she to do her time with the child?"

"Mama, she is very angry."

"That gal is beat-beating my head. Three months now she is not greeting me. What insects are eating her brain?" Sometimes Mama's words came out like a yawn because the holes between her teeth were wide. "Eh, now that she shakes-shakes her body to moneymen she thinks she has passed me? Tell me, why did she refuse to stay with Baby?"

"She says it's child abuse."

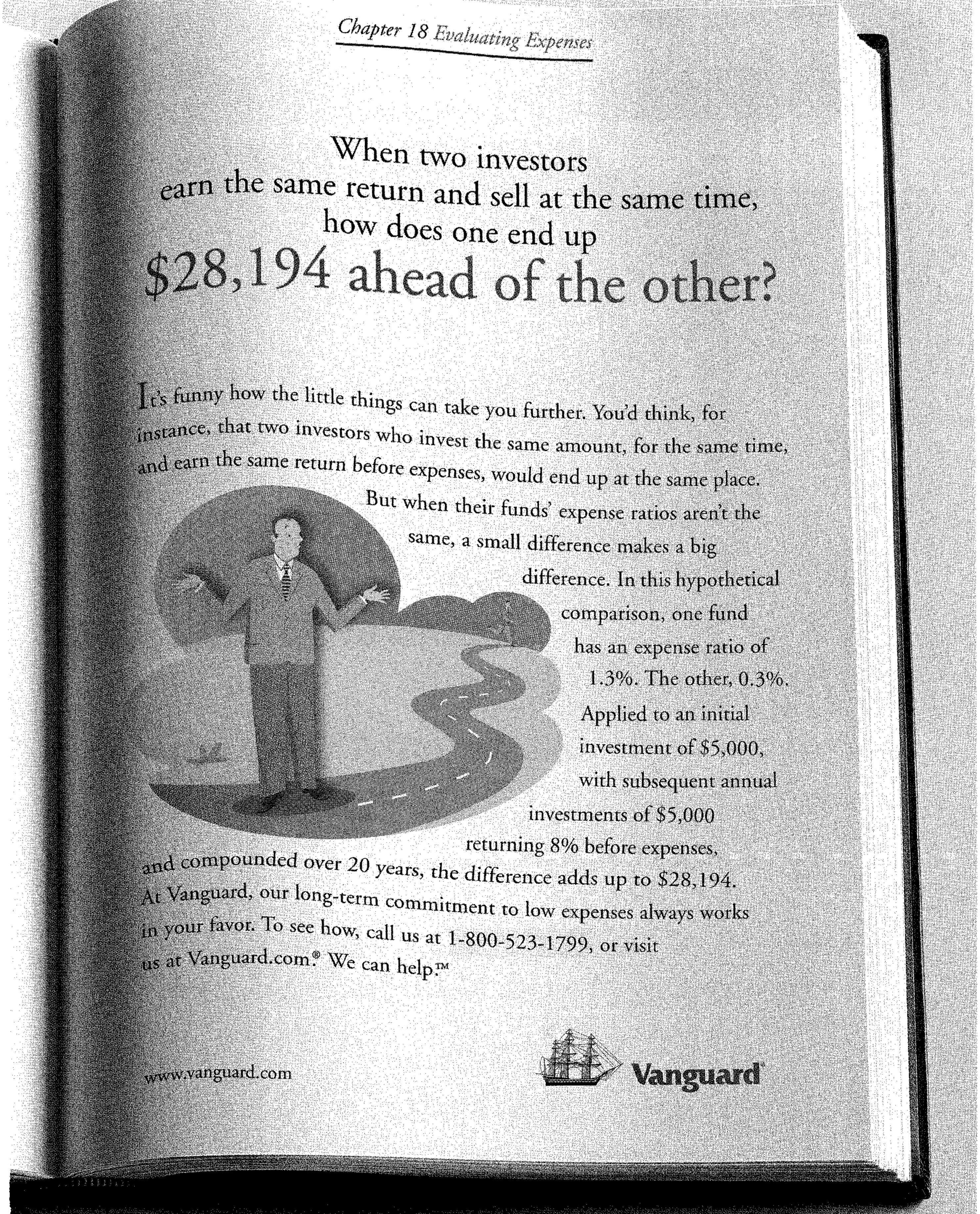
"Child abuse? Is she now N.G.O. worker? She likes being a prostitute better than begging with Baby?"

"Me, I don't know. She just went with the *ma*-men tourists. Today, real white people, *musungu*. With monkey."

Mama spat through the doorway. "*Puu*, those ones are useless. I know them. They don't ever pay the Ex-mas rate—and then they even let their *ma*-monkey fuck her. Jigana, talk with that gal. Or don't you want to complete school? She can't just give you uniform only."

I nodded. I had already tried on the uniform eight times in two days, anxious to resume school. The green-and-white checked shirt and olive-green shorts had become wrinkled. Now I reached into the carton and stroked a piece of the uniform that stuck out of the jumble.

"Why are you messing with this beautiful uniform?" Mama said. "Patience, boy. School is just around the corner." She dug to the bottom of the carton and buried the package. "Maisha likes your face," she whispered. "Please, Jigana, tell



Chapter 18 Evaluating Expenses

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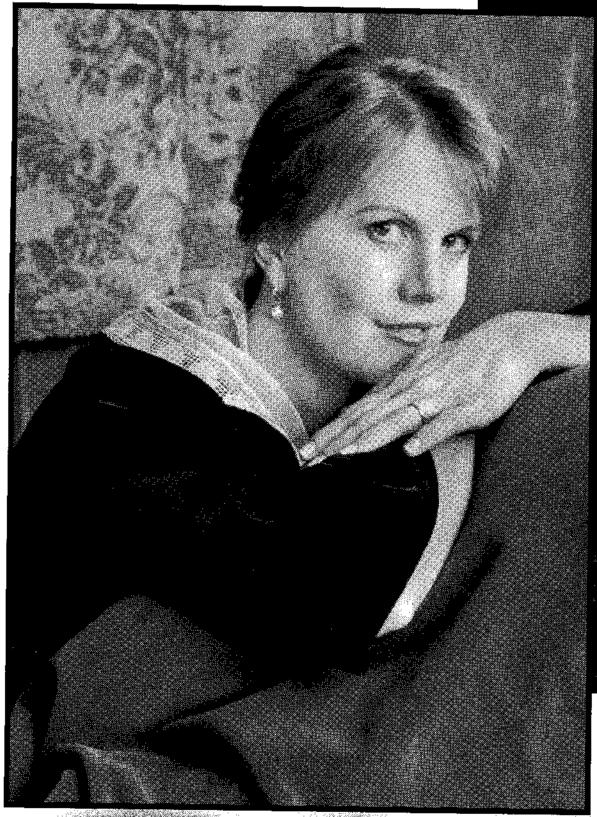

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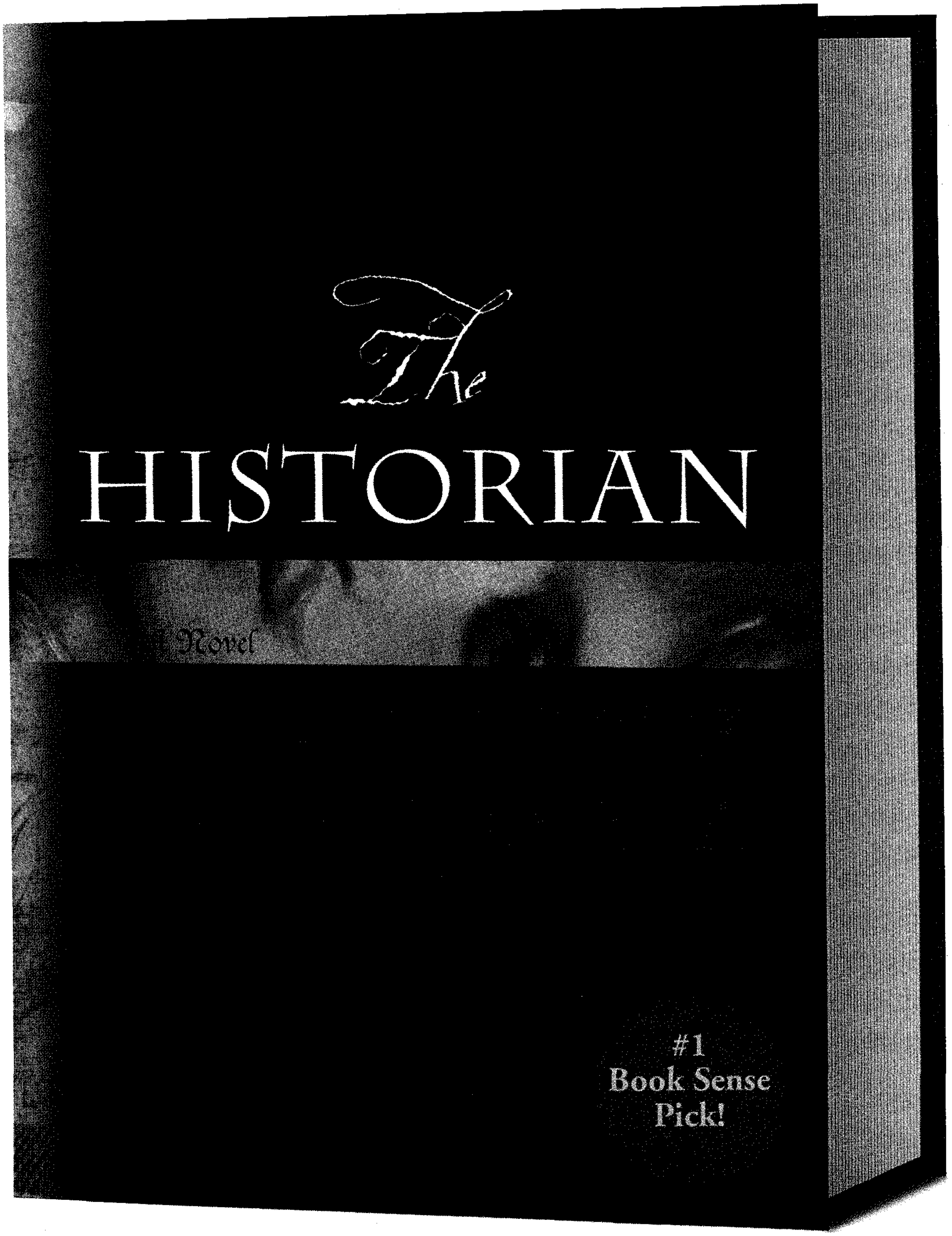
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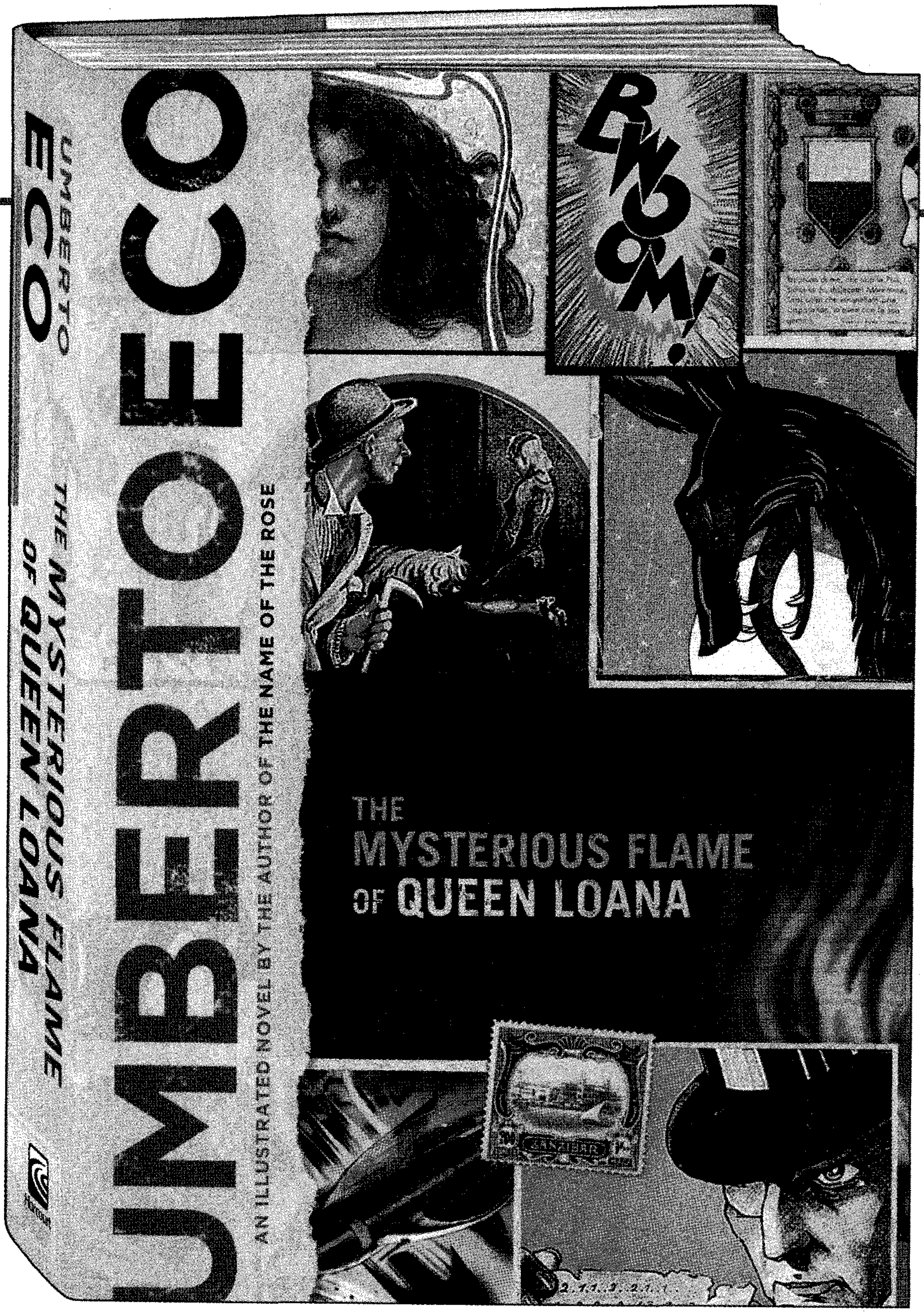

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He returns to his family home in the Northern hills of Italy and searches through boxes of old newspapers, photos, comics and diaries in an effort to reconstruct his past. From Mussolini to Josephine Baker, Flash Gordon to Fred Astaire, he relives the story of his generation, all to capture one simple, innocent image: that of his first love.

"Eco is a master storyteller."
—*The Baltimore Sun*

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THE MARE OUT ON THE ROAD

Sliding round the corner on gravel
and there was a mare across the road
and a steep embankment down to the paddock.
The moment was crammed with just two choices.

Sliding fast, with the brakes shoaling gravel.
Five metres down, and would the car capsize?
The moment was crammed with just two choices.
One of two accidents would have to happen.

The poor horse was a beautiful innocent
but her owner never let a grudge go by.
No court case, just family slurs for life.
Sliding fast with the brakes shoaling gravel.

Now the mare was expanding. Would she run?
leave a gap before or behind to drive through?
No chance. She grew in moist astonishment.
Five metres down, and would the car capsize?

Blood hoof collision would be NOW, without a swerve.
Would the car explode in flames, below? It hung
aslant, away down. The door groaned up like a hatch.
No court case, just family slurs for life

because the old man didn't believe in accidents,
nor in gestures. The mare trots off
ahead of boots hobbling to find the old man's son.
The poor horse was a beautiful innocent.

The breeder's son on their tractor
was full of apologies and shame, winching
the mouth-full, glass-weeping car back up in secret
because the old man didn't believe in accidents.

—*Les Murray*

her you need more—shoes, P.T.A. fee, prep fee. We must to save all Ex-mas rate to educate you, first son. Tell her she must stop buying those *fuunny fuunny* designer clothes, those clothes smelling of dead white people, and give us the money."

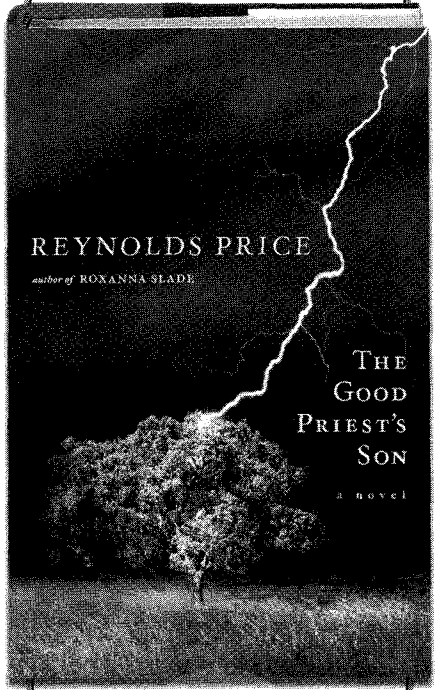
As she said this, she started to pound angrily on the trunk. The trunk was a big obstruction. It was the only piece of furniture we had with a solid and definite shape. Maisha had brought it home a year ago, and always ordered us to leave the shack before she would open it. None of us knew what its secret contents were, except for a lingering perfume. It held for us both suspense and consolation, and these feelings grew each time Maisha came back with new things. Sometimes, when Maisha did not come back for a long time, our anxiety turned the trunk into an assurance of her return.

"*Malaya!* Prostitute! She doesn't come and I break the box tonight," Mama hissed, spitting on the combination lock and shaking the trunk until we could hear its contents knocking about. She always took her anger out on the trunk in Maisha's absence. I reached out to grab her hands.

"You pimp!" she growled. "You support the *malaya*."

"It's not her fault. It's *musungu* tourists."

"You better begin school before she runs away."



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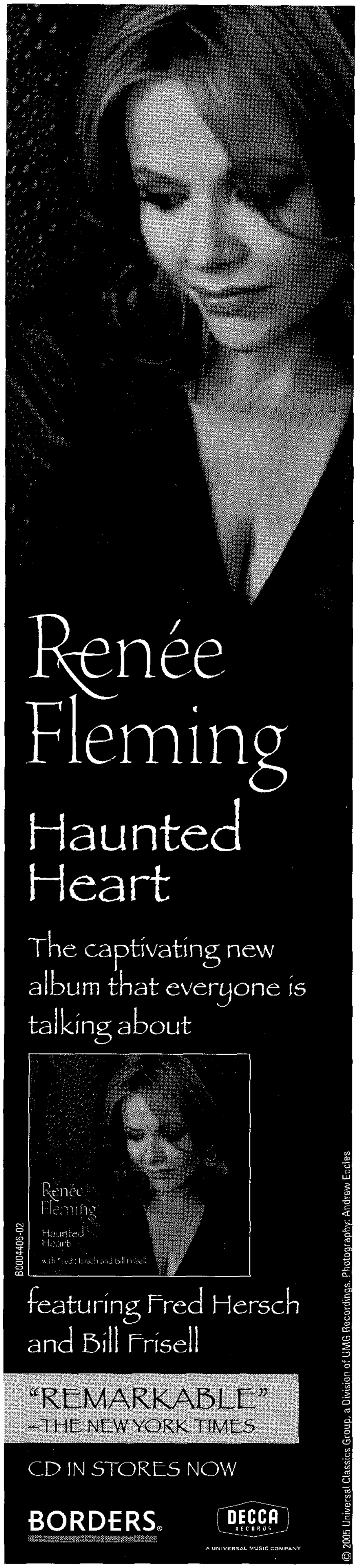
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"I must to report her to you."

"I must to bury you and your motor-mouth in this box."

We struggled. Her long nails slashed my forehead, and blood trickled down. But she was still shaking the trunk. Turning around, I charged at her and bit her right thigh. I could not draw blood because I had lost my front milk teeth. She let go and reeled into the bodies of our sleeping family. Atieno let out one short eerie scream, as if in a nightmare, then went back to sleep. Baba groaned and said he did not like his family members fighting during Ex-mas. "You bite my wife because of that whore?" he groaned. "The cane will discipline you in the morning. I must to personally ask your headmaster to get a big cane for you."

A welt had fruited up on Mama's thigh. She rolled up her dress and started massaging it, her lips moving in silent curses. Then, to punish me, she took the *kabire* she had poured for me and applied it to the swelling. She pushed the mouth of the bottle against it, expecting the fumes to ease the hurt.

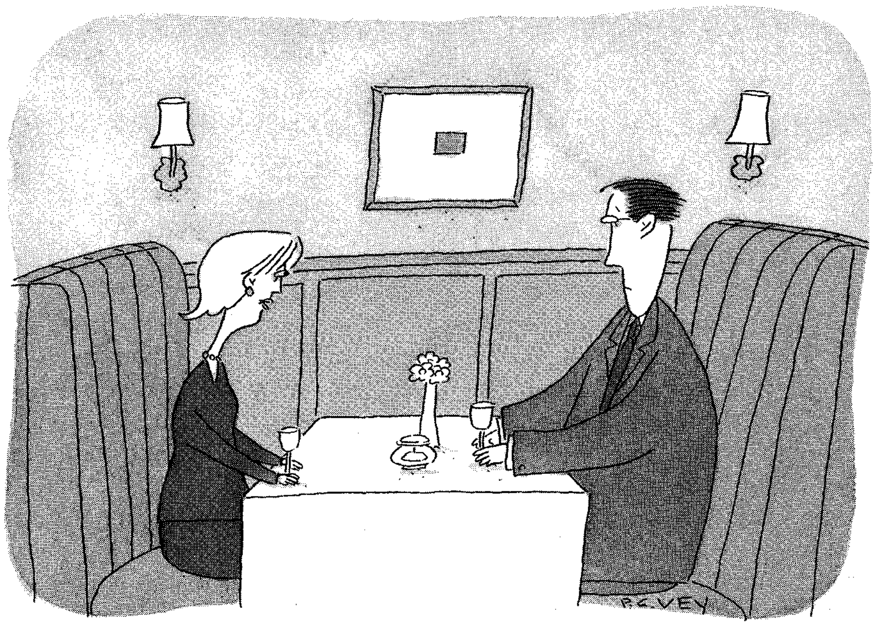
When Mama had finished nursing herself, she returned the bottle to me. Since it was still potent *kabire*, I did not sniff it straight but put my lips around the mouth of the bottle and smoked slowly, as if it were an oversized joint of *bhang*, Indian hemp. First it felt as if I had no saliva in my mouth, and then the fumes began to numb my tongue. The heat climbed steadily into my throat, tickling my nostrils like an aborted sneeze. I cooled off a bit and blew away the vapor. Then I sucked at it again and swallowed. My eyes watered, my head began to spin, and I dropped the bottle.

When I looked up, Mama had poured some *kabire* for herself and was sniffing it. She and Baba hardly ever took *kabire*. "*Kabire* is for children only," Baba's late father used to admonish them whenever he caught them eying our glue. This Ex-mas we were not too desperate for food. In addition to the money that begging with Baby had brought us, Baba had managed to steal some wrapped gifts from a party given for *machokosh* families by an N.G.O., whose organizers were so stingy that they served fruit juice like shots of hard liquor. He had dashed to another charity party and traded in the useless gifts—plastic cutlery, picture frames, paperweights, insecticides—for three cups of rice and zebra intestines, which a tourist hotel had donated. We'd had these for dinner on Ex-mas Eve.

"Happee, happee Ex-mas, *tarling!*" Mama toasted me after a while, rubbing my head.

"You, too, Mama."

"Now where are these daughters? Don't they want to do Ex-mas prayer?" She sniffed the bottle till her eyes receded, her face pinched like the face of a mad cow. "And the govament banned this sweet thing. Say thanks to the neighbors, boy. Where did they find this hunger-killer?" Sometimes she released her lips from the bottle with a kissing sound. As



"I think we should start making commitments to other people we can't keep."

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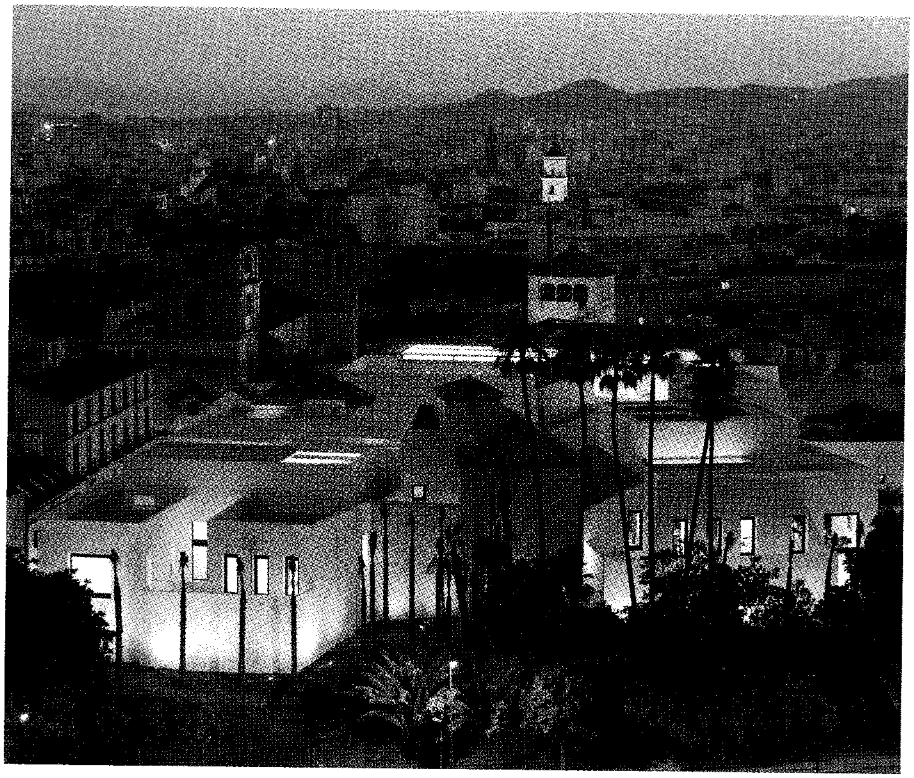
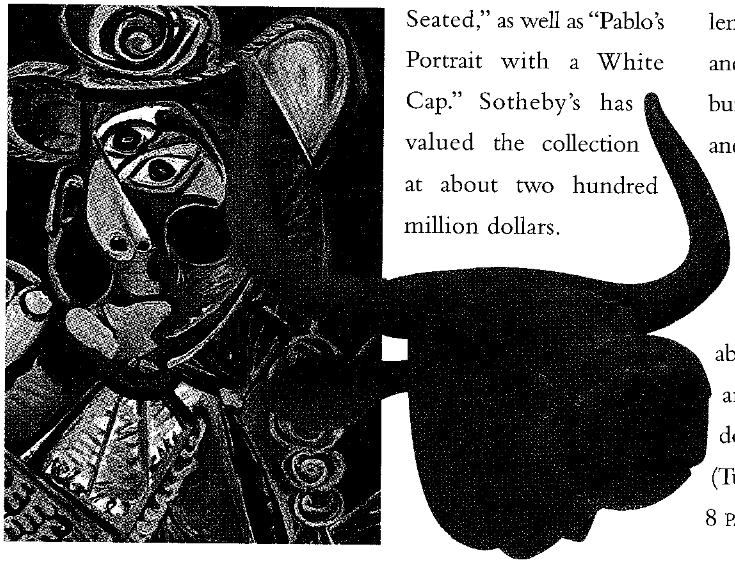


PICASSO IN MÁLAGA

Pablo Picasso has come home at the Museo Picasso in Málaga, the city of his birth. Housed in the newly expanded three-hundred-year-old Palacio de los Condes de Buenavista, a Renaissance and Mudéjar palace in the historic center of this Andalucian city, the museum is displaying more than two hundred works from 1896 to 1972. The permanent collection includes forty-two oil paintings, eleven sculptures, sketches, prints, and ceramic works representing all stages of Picasso's life. An additional thirty pieces are also on loan until this October. Among them are such masterpieces as "The Girl and Her Doll," "Olga Koklova with Mantilla," "Man, Woman and Child," "Jacqueline Seated," as well as "Pablo's Portrait with a White Cap." Sotheby's has valued the collection at about two hundred million dollars.



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While some of the artwork has been exhibited before, many of the pieces come from the private collections of family members. In fact, the collection is not designed to compete with those of the Picasso Museums in Barcelona, Paris, or Antibes; rather it is a family museum. Picasso's daughter-in-law and his grandson donated and loaned most of the works. The museum fulfills a lifelong dream held by the artist who lived in exile in France until 1973 and had hoped to open a gallery in his birthplace before his death. Picasso had vowed never to return to Spain while General Francisco Franco was still in power.

Built between 1516 and 1542, the Buenavista Palace is an excellent example of sixteenth-century civilian Andalucian architecture and is located in the heart of Málaga's historic district. The building was restored by New York architect Richard Gluckman and Spanish architects Isabel Cámara and Rafael Martin Delgado.

Besides the permanent collection, the museum plans an ambitious schedule of temporary exhibitions covering all aspects of Picasso's work, his world, and contemporaries.

Admission to the Picasso Museum (Pl. de la Merced, 15) costs about seven dollars (USD). Tickets to the temporary exhibition are about five dollars; admission to both is about nine dollars, and seniors, students, and children enjoy reduced rates. (Tuesday–Thursdays, Sundays, and holiday hours from 10 A.M.–8 P.M.; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 A.M.–9 P.M.). ■

Visit **MUSEOPICASSOMALAGA.ORG** and **VISITCOSTADELSOL.COM**, or go to **OKSPAIN.ORG** and **SPAIN.INFO** the night thickened, her face began to swell, and she kept pouting and biting her lips to check the numbness. They turned red—they looked like Maisha's when she had on lipstick—and puffed up.

"Mama? So, what can we give the neighbors for Ex-mas?" I asked, remembering that we had not bought anything for our friends.

My question jerked her back. "Petrol . . . we will buy them a half litre of petrol," she said, and belched. Her breath smelled of carbide, then of sour wine. When she looked up again our eyes met, and I lowered mine in embarrassment. In our *machokosh* culture, petrol was not as valuable as glue. Any self-respecting street kid should always have his own stock of *kabire*. "O.K., son, next year . . . we get better things. I don't want police business this year—so don't start having ideas."

We heard two drunks stumbling toward our home. Mama hid the bottle. They stood outside announcing that they had come to wish us a Merry Ex-mas. "My husband is not here!" Mama lied. I recognized the voices. It was Bwana Marcos Wako and his wife, Cecilia. Baba had owed them money for four years. They came whenever they smelled money, and Baba had to take off for a few days. When Baby was born, we pawned three-quarters of his clothing to defray the debts. A week before Ex-mas, the couple had raided us, confiscating Baba's working clothes in the name of debt servicing.

I quickly covered the trunk with rags and reached into my pocket, tightening my grip around the rusty penknife I carried about.

Mama and I stood by the door. Bwana Wako wore his trousers upside down, belted across his forehead; the legs, flailing behind him, were tied into knots and stuffed with *ugali* flour, which he must have got from a street party. Cecilia wore only her jacket and her rain boots.

"Ah, Mama Jigana-*ni* Ex-mas!" the husband said. "Forget the money. Happee Ex-mas!"

"We hear Jigana is going to school," the wife said.

"Who told you?" Mama said warily. "Me, I don't like rumors."

They turned to me. "Happee to resume school, boy?"

"Me am not going to school," I lied to spare my tuition money.

"*Kai*, like mama like son!" the wife said. "You must to know you are the hope of your family."

"Mama Jigana, listen," the man said. "Maisha came to us last week. Good, responsible gal. She begged us to let bygone be bygone so Jigana can go to school. We say forget the money—our Ex-mas gift to your family."

"You must to go far with education, Jigana," the wife said, handing me a new pen and pencil. "*Mpaka* university!"

Mama laughed, jumping into the flooded alley. She hugged them and allowed them to come closer to our shack. They staggered to our door, swaying like masqueraders on stilts.

"*Asante sana!*" I thanked them. I uncorked the pen and wrote all over my palms and smelled the tart scent of the Hero HB pencil. Mama wedged herself between them and the shack to insure that they did not pull it down. Baba whispered to us from inside, ready to slip away, "Ha, they told me the same thing last year. You watch and see, tomorrow they come looking for me. Make them sign paper this time." Mama quickly got them some paper and they signed, using my back as a table. Then they staggered away, the stuffed trousers bouncing along behind them.

Mama began to sing Maisha's praises and promised never to pound on her trunk again. Recently, Maisha had taken the twins to the barber's and Baby to Kenyatta National Hospital for a checkup. Now she had got our debt cancelled. I felt like running out to search for her in the streets. I wanted to hug her and laugh till the moon dissolved. I wanted to buy her Coke and chapati, for sometimes she forgot to eat. But when Mama saw me combing my hair she said nobody was allowed to leave until we had finished saying the Ex-mas prayer.

I hung out with Maisha some nights on the street, and we talked about fine cars and lovely Nairobi suburbs. We'd imagine what it would be like to visit the Masai Mara Game Reserve or to eat roasted ostrich or crocodile at the Carnivore, like tourists.

"You beautiful!" I had told Maisha one night on Koinange Street, months before that fateful Ex-mas.

"Ah, no, me am not." She laughed, pulling down her jeans miniskirt. "Stop lying."

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if you want to read a

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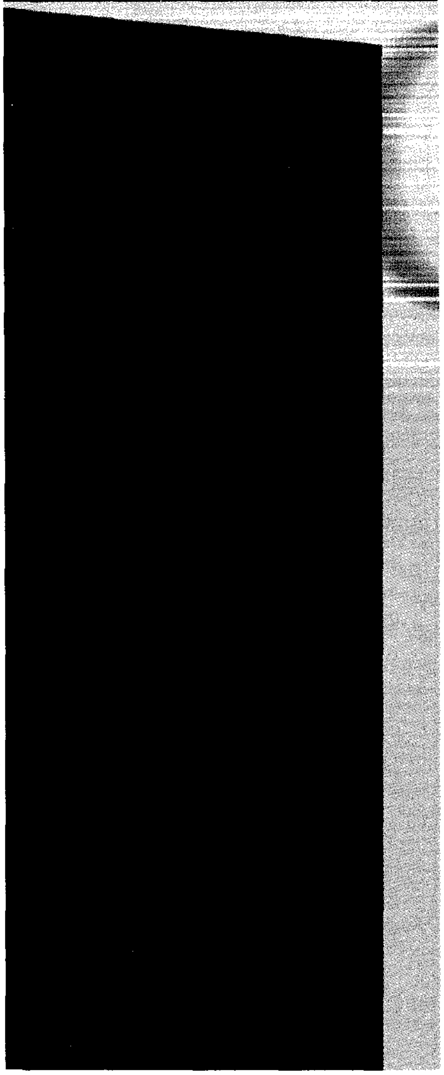

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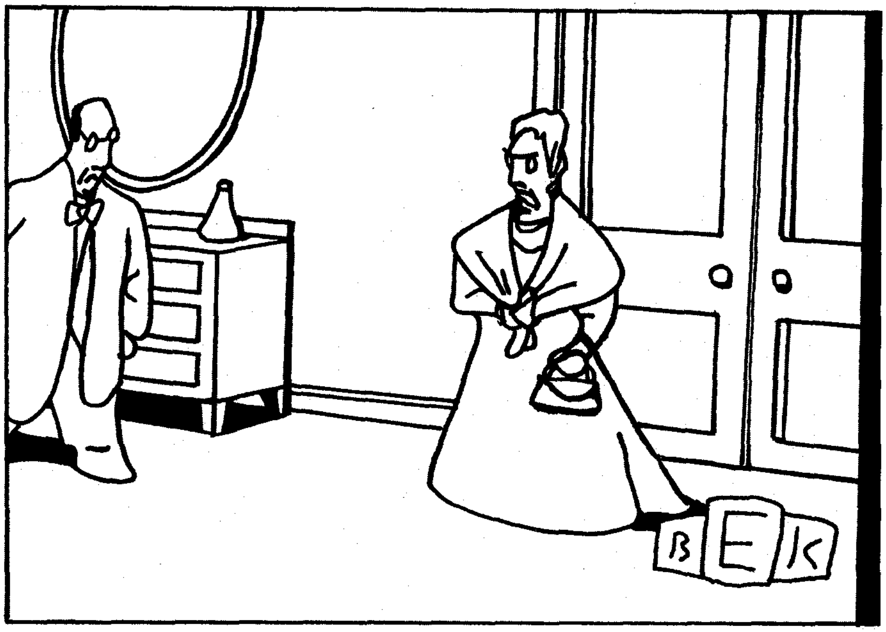


"We're going to be late for the awkwardly standing around."

• •

"See your face?"

"*Kai*, who sent you?"

"And you bounce like models."

"Yah, yah, yah. Not tall. Nose? Too short and big. No lean face or full lips. No firsthand designer clothes. Not daring or beautiful like Naema. Perfume and mascara are not everything."

"*Haki*, you? Beautiful woman," I said, clicking my fingers. "You will be tall tomorrow."

"You are asking me out?" she said in jest, and struck a pose. She made faces as if she were playing with the twins and said, "Be a man, do it the right way."

I shrugged and laughed.

"Me, I have no shilling, big gal."

"I will discount you, guy."

"Stop it."

"Oh, come on," she said, and pulled me into a hug.

Giggling, we began walking, our strides softened by laughter. Everything became funny. We couldn't stop laughing at ourselves, at the people around us. When my sides began to ache and I stopped, she tickled my ribs.

We laughed at the gangs of street kids massed together in sound sleep. Some gangs slept in graded symmetry. Others slept in freestyle. Some had a huge waterproof above their piles to protect them from the elements. Others had nothing. We laughed at a group of city taxi-drivers huddled together, warming themselves with cups of *chai* and fiery political banter while waiting for the Akamba buses to arrive with passengers from Tanzania and Uganda. Occasionally we'd see the anxious faces of these visitors in the old taxis, bracing for what would be the most dangerous twenty minutes of their twelve-hour journeys, fearful of being robbed whenever the taxis slowed down.

We were not afraid of the city at night. It was our playground. At times like this, it was as if Maisha had forgotten her job and all she wanted to do was laugh and playact.

"You? Nice guy," Maisha said.

"Lie."

I pulled at her handbag.

"You will be a big man tomorrow. . . ."

She dashed past me suddenly to wave down a chauffeured Volvo. It stopped right in front of her, the glass rolling down. A man in the back seat inspected her and shook his bald head. He beckoned a taller girl from the cluster jostling behind her, trying to fit their faces in the window. Maisha ran to a silver Mercedes-Benz wagon, but the owner picked a shorter girl.

"Someday, I must to find a real job," Maisha said, sighing, when she came back.

"What job, gal?"

"I want to try full time."

"*Wapi*?"

She shrugged. "Mombasa? Dar?"

I shook my head. "Bad news, big gal. How long?"

"I don't know. *Ni maisha yangu*, guy, it's my life. I'm thinking, full time will allow me to pay your fees and also save for myself. I will send money through the church for you. I'll quit the brothel when I save a bit. I don't want to stand on the road forever. Me myself must to go to school one day. . . ."

The words died in her throat. She pursed her lips, folded her hands across her chest, and rocked from side to side. She did not rush to any more cars.

"We won't see you again?" I said. "No, thanks. If you enter brothel, me I won't go to school."

"Then I get to keep my money, ha-ha. Without you, they won't see my shilling in that house. Never." She saw my face, stopped suddenly, then burst into giggles. "I was kidding you, guy, about the brothel. Just kidding, O.K."

She tickled me, pulling me toward Moi Avenue. I held her hand tightly. Prostitutes fluttered about under streetlights, dressed like winged termites.

"Maisha, our parents—"

She turned sharply, her fists balled.

"Shut up! You shame me, you rat. Leave me alone. Me am not your mate. You can't afford me!"

Other girls turned and stared at us, giggling. Maisha strode away. It had been a mistake to mention our parents in front of the other girls, to let them know that we were related. And I shouldn't have called her by her real name. I cried all the way home because I had hurt her. She ignored me for weeks.

After Mama stopped celebrating the end of our debt, she fished out two little Uchumi Supermarket waterproof bags from the carton and smoothed them out as if they were rumpled socks. She put them over her canvas shoes, tying the handles around her ankles in little bows. Then she walked out into the flood, her winged galoshes scooping the water like a duck's feet. She started to untie our bag of utensils and food, which was leaning against the shop, her eyes searching for a dry spot to set up the stove, to warm some food for the twins. But the rain was coming down too heavily now, and after a while she gave up.

"Jigana, so did you see those Maisha's *ma*-men?" she asked.

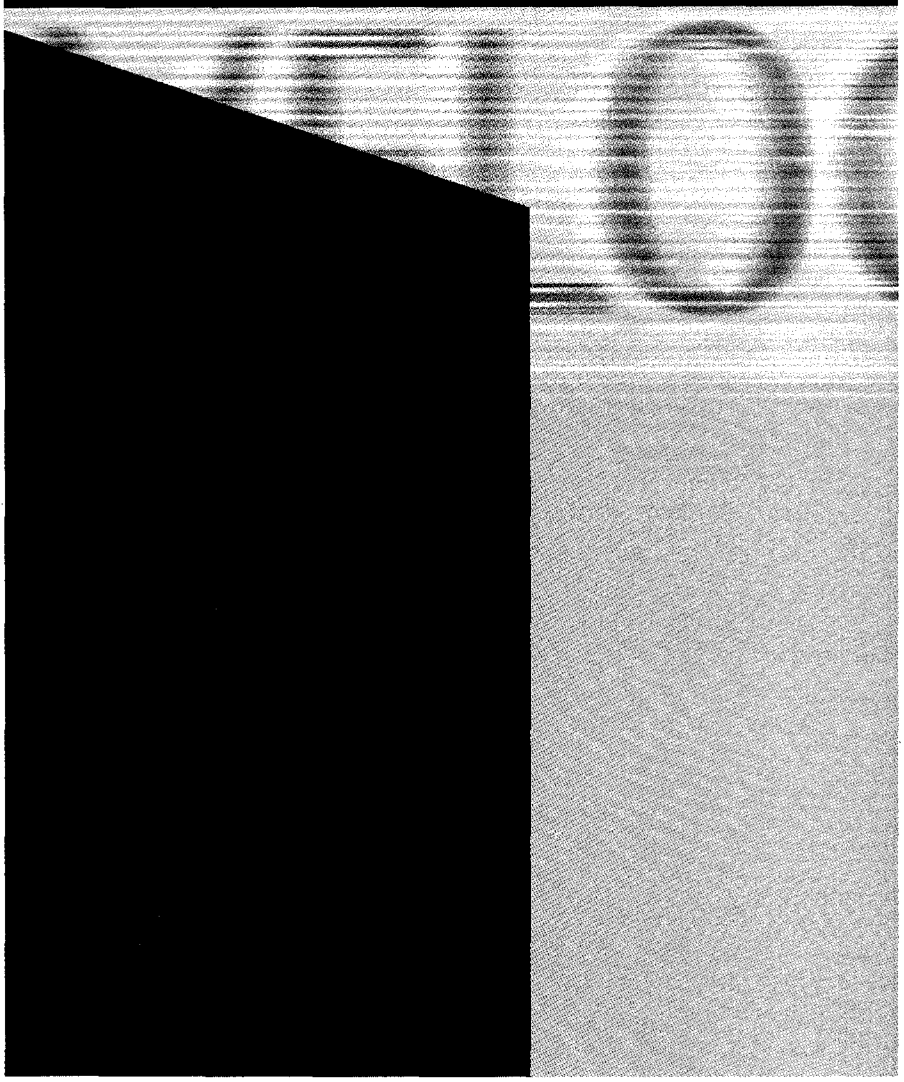
Imagine

crossing the line

you never thought you

would cross...

Think fast



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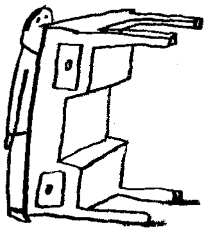
"There were three white men, plus driver. Tall, old men in knickers and tennis shoes. I shook hands with them. Beautiful-beautiful motorcar. . . . I even pinched that monkey."

"Motorcar? They had a motorcar? *Imachine* a motorcar to pick up my daughter." She stretched forward and held my arms, smiling. "You mean my daughter is big like that?"

Otieno woke up with a start. He stood groggily on the cushions, then he climbed over Mama's legs, levered himself over me with his hand on my head, and landed in the flood outside the shack in a crouch. He began to lower thin spools of shit into the water, whiffs of heat unwrapping into the night, the cheeks of his buttocks rouged by the cold.

When Otieno returned to the shack, he sat on Mama's legs and brought out her breast and sucked noisily. With one hand, he grabbed a toy Maisha had bought for him, rattling its maracas on Mama's bony face. She was still looking ragged and underweight, even though she'd stayed in the hospital to have her diet monitored after Baby graduated from the incubator.

Mama took out our family Bible, which we had inherited from Baba's father, to begin our Ex-mas worship. The front cover had peeled off, leaving a dirty page full of our relatives' names, dead and living. She read them out. Baba's late father had insisted that all the names of our family be included in recognition of the instability of street life. She began with her father, who had been killed by cattle rustlers, before she ran away to Nairobi and started living with Baba. She called out Baba's mother, who came to Nairobi when her village was razed because some politicians wanted to redraw tribal boundaries. One day she disappeared forever into the city with her walking stick. Mama invoked the names of our cousins Jackie and Solo, who settled in another village, and wrote to us through our church, asking our parents to send them school fees. I looked forward to telling them about the lit parks and the beautiful cars of Nairobi as soon as my teachers taught me how to write letters. She called out her brother, Uncle Peter, who had shown me how to shower in the city fountains without being whipped by the officials. He was shot by the police in a case of mistaken identity; the mortuary gave his corpse to a medical school because we could not pay the bill. She called Baba's second cousin Mercy, the only secondary-school graduate among our folks. She had not written to us since she fell in love with a Honolulu tourist and eloped with him. Mama called Baba's sister, Auntie Mama, who, until she died two years ago of a heart attack, had told us stories and taught us songs about our ancestral lands every evening, in a sweet, nostalgic voice.



The sky rumbled.

"*Bwana*, I hope Naema put clothes on Baby before she left," Mama said to me, the middle of her sentence wobbling because Otieno had bitten her.

"She put Baby in waterproof paper bags. Then sweater."

Otieno, having satisfied himself, woke up Atieno, who took over the other breast, for they had divided things up evenly between them. Atieno sucked until she slept again, and Mama placed her gently near Otieno and began to shake Baba until he opened one eye. His weak voice vibrated because his face was jammed into the wall: "Food."

"No food, *tarling*," Mama told him. "We must to finish to call the names of our people."

"You'll be calling my name if I don't eat."

"Here is food—New Suntan Shoe *kabire*." She reached out and collected the plastic bottle from me. "It can kill your stomach till next week."

"All the children are here?"

"Baby and Naema still out. Last shift . . . and Maisha."

"Ah, there is hope. Maisha will bring an Ex-mas feast for us."

"Ex-mas is school fees, remember?"

Mama groped inside the carton again. She unearthed a dirty candle, pocked by grains of sand. She lit the candle and cemented it to the trunk with its wax. Taking the Bible, she began to read a psalm in Kiswahili, thanking God for the gift of Baby and the twins after two miscarriages. She praised God for blessing Maisha with white clients at Ex-mas. Then she prayed for Fuunny Eyes, the name we had given to the young Japanese volunteer who unfailingly dropped shillings in our begging plate. She wore Masai tire sandals and

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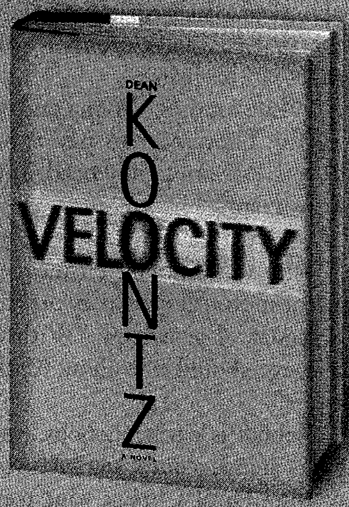

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necklaces that held her neck like a noose, and never replied to our greetings or let our eyes meet hers. She prayed for our former landlord in the Kibera slums, who evicted us but hadn't seized anything when we could not pay the rent. Now Mama asked God to bless Simba with many puppies. "Christ, you Ex-mas son, give Jigana a big, intelligent head in school!" she concluded.

"Have mercy on us," I said.

"Holy Mary, Mama Ex-mas . . . "

"Pray for us."

It was drizzling again when Naema returned with Baby. He was asleep. Naema's jeans, *mutumba* loafers, and braided hair dribbled water, her big eyes red from crying. Usually, she sauntered in singing a Brenda Fassie song, but tonight she plodded in deflated.

She handed the money over to Mama, who quickly banked it in her purse. She also gave Mama a packet of pasteurized milk. It was half full, and Naema explained that she'd had to buy it to stop Baby from crying. Mama nodded. The milk pack was soggy and looked as if it would disintegrate. Mama took it carefully in her hands, like one receiving a certificate. When Naema brought out a half-eaten turkey drumstick, Mama grabbed her ears, thinking that she had bought it with the money she'd earned begging. Naema quickly explained that her new boyfriend had given it to her. This boy was a big shot in the street gang that controlled our area, a dreaded figure. Maisha and I detested him, but he liked Naema like his own tongue.

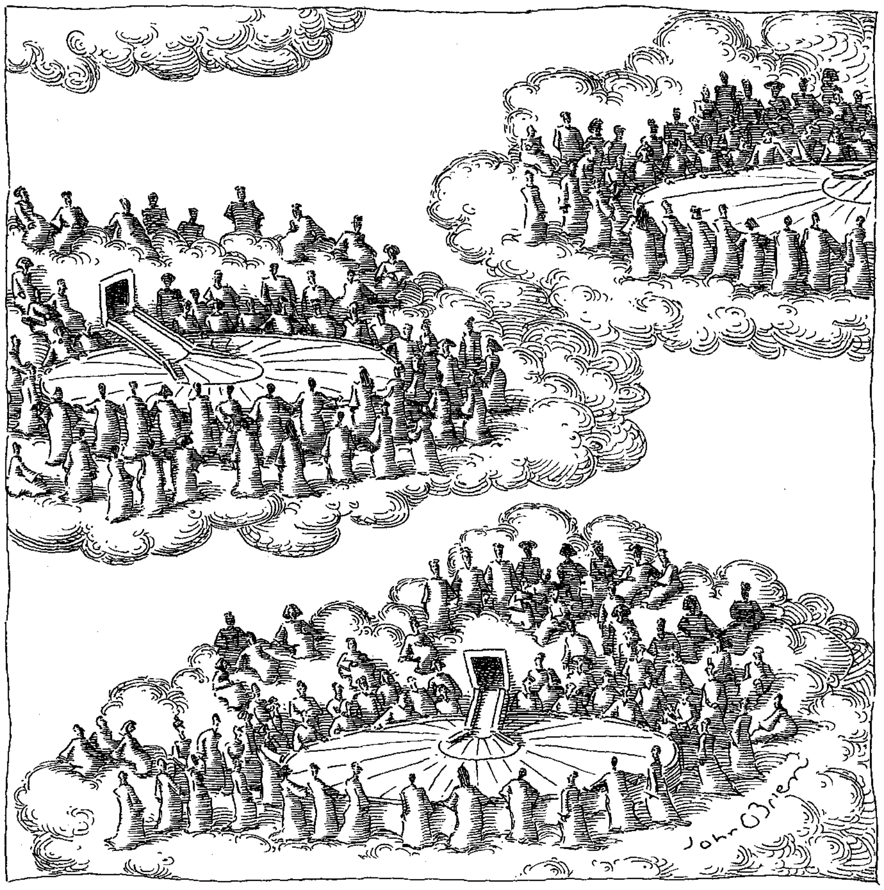
Now Naema wriggled and fitted her lithe frame into the tangle on the floor, and began to weep silently. Mama pulled the blanket from the others and covered the girl's feet, which had become wrinkled in the rain.

"Maisha is moving out tomorrow," Naema said. "Full time."

Mama's face froze. No matter how rootless and cheap street life might be, you could still be broken by departures. I went outside and lay on the row of empty paint containers we had lined up along the shop's wall, hiding my face in the crook of my arm.

Guilt began to build in my guts. Maybe if I had joined a street gang Maisha would not have wanted to leave. I wouldn't have needed money for school fees, and perhaps there would have been peace between Maisha and my parents. But my anger was directed at the *musungu* men, for they were the visible faces of my sister's temptation. I wished I were as powerful as Naema's boyfriend, or that I could recruit him. We could burn up their Jaguar. We could tie them up and give them the beating of their lives and take away all their papers. We could strip those *musungu* naked, as I had seen Naema's friend do to someone who had hurt a member of his gang. Or we could at least kill and eat that monkey, or just cut off his *mboro* so he could never fuck anybody's sister again. I removed my knife from my pocket and examined the blade carefully. The fact that it was very blunt and had dents did not worry me. I knew that if I stabbed with all my energy I would draw blood.

After a while, my plans began to unravel. I realized that I would never be able to enlist Naema's boyfriend. Naema herself would block the plan. In fact, until that night she had been taunting Maisha to move out, saying that if she were as old as Maisha she would have left home long ago. Besides, even if I fled to the Kibera slums, as soon as we touched the tourists the police would come and arrest my parents and dismantle our shack. They would take away Maisha's trunk and steal her treasures.



Baba started awake, as if a loud noise had hit him.

"Is that Maisha?" he asked, closing his eyes again.

"No, Maisha is working," Mama said. "My Maisha commands *musungu* and motorcars!" she said, her good mood returning.

"What? What *musungu*, *tarling*?" Baba asked, sitting up immediately, rubbing sleep and hunger from his eyes with the base of his palms.

"White tourists," Mama said.

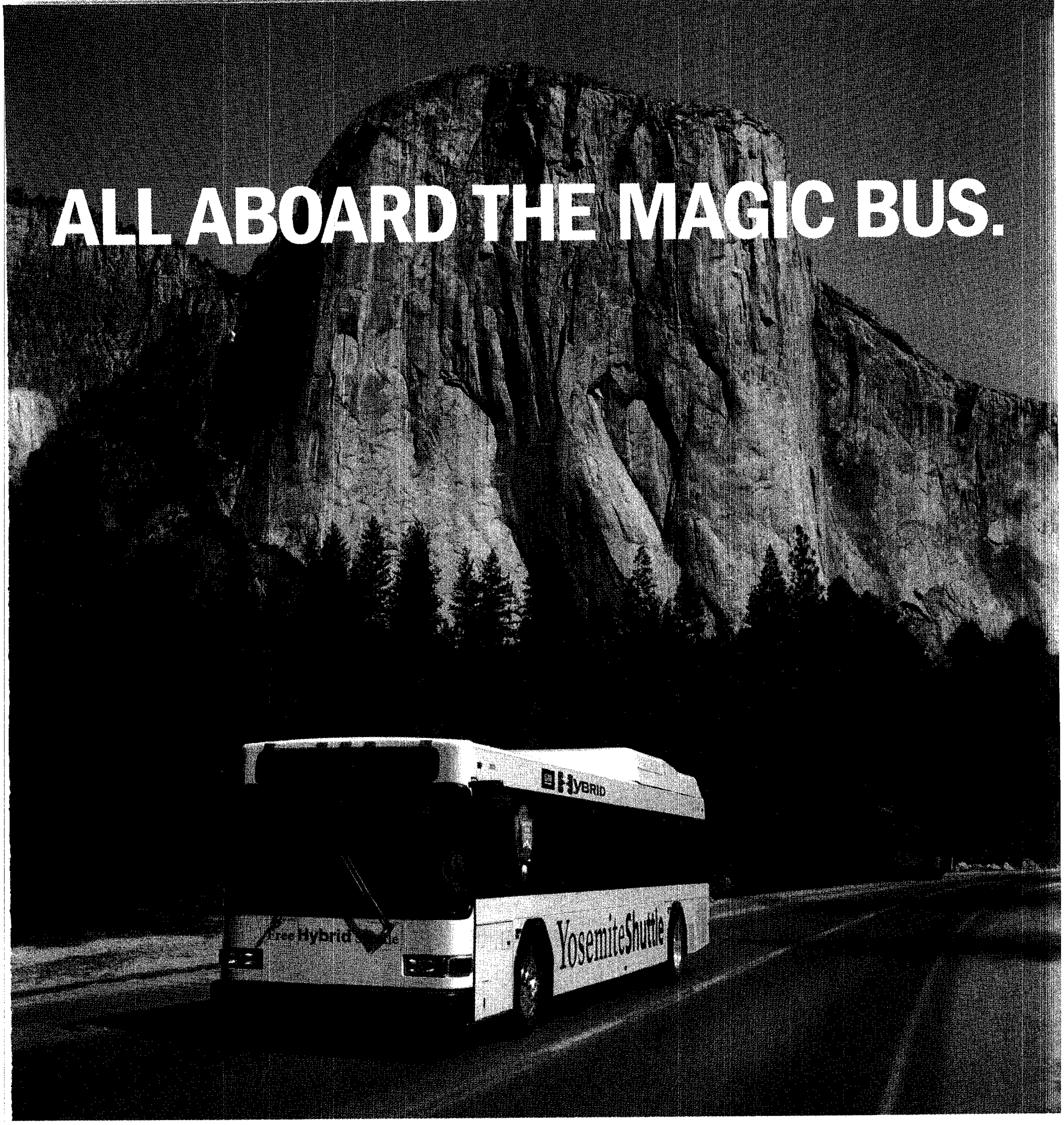
"Uh? They must to pay *ma*-dollar or euros. Me am family head. You hear me, woman?"

"Yes."

"And no Honolulu business. What kind of motorcar were they driving?"

"Jaguar," I answered. "With driver. Baba, we should not allow Maisha to leave—"

"Nobody is leaving, nobody. And shut up your animal mouth! You have wounded my wife! Until I break your teeth tomorrow, no opinion from you. No nothing. Did you thank the *ma*-men for me?"



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"No," I said.

"*Aiiee!* Jigana, where are your manners? Did you ask where they were going? Motorcar number?"

"No, Baba."

"So if they take her to Honolulu what do I do? Maybe we should send you to a street gang. Boy, have you not learned to grab opportunities. Is this how you will waste school fees in January? Poor Maisha."

He squinted incredulously, and lines of doubt kinked up his massive forehead. He pursed his lips, and anger quickened his breath. But that night I stood my ground.

"I don't want school anymore, Baba," I said.

"Coward, shut up. That one is a finished matter."

"No."

"What do you mean by no? You want to be a pocket thief like me . . . my son? My first son? You can't be useless as the gals. *Wallai!*"

"Me, I don't want school."

"Your mind is too young to think. As we say, 'The teeth that come first are not used in chewing.' As long as you live here, your Baba says school."

"*La hasha.*"

"You telling me *never*? Jigana!" He looked at Mama. "He doesn't want school? St. Jude Thaddaeus!"

"*Bwana*, this boy has grown stronghead," Mama said. "See how he is looking at our eyes. Insult!"

Baba stood up suddenly, his hands shaking. I didn't cover my cheeks with my hands to protect me from his slap or spittle, as I usually did when he was angry. I was ready for him to kill me. My family was breaking up because of me. He stood there, trembling with anger, confused.

Mama patted his shoulders to calm him down. He brushed her aside and went outside to cool off. I monitored him through a hole in the wall. Soon he was cursing himself aloud for drinking too much and sleeping through Ex-mas Day and missing the chance to meet the tourists. As his mind turned to Maisha's good fortune, he began to sing "A Jaguar is a Jaguar is a Jaguar" to the night, leaping from stone to stone, tracing the loose cobbles that studded the floodwater like the heads of stalking crocodiles in a river. In the sky, some of the tall city buildings were branded by lights left on by forgetful employees, and a few shopping centers wore the glitter of Ex-mas; flashing lights ascended and descended, like angels on Jacob's dream ladder. The long city buses, Baba's hunting grounds, had stopped for the night. As the streets became emptier, cars drove faster through the floods, kicking up walls of water, which collapsed on our shack.

Back inside, Baba plucked his half-used *miraa* stick from the rafter and started chewing. He fixed his eyes on the trunk. A mysterious smile dribbled out of the corners of his mouth. Eventually, the long stick of *miraa* subsided into a formless sponge in his mouth. His spitting was sharp, and arced across the room and out the door. Suddenly, his face brightened. "*Hakuna Matata!*" he said. Then he dipped into the carton and came up with a roll of wire, and started lashing the wheels of the trunk to the props of our shack. For a moment, it seemed he might be able to stop Maisha from going away.

Mama tried to discourage him from tying down the trunk. "*Bwanaaa* . . . stop it! She will leave if she finds you *manga-mangaring* with her things."

"Woman, leave this business to me," he said, rebuking her. "I'm not going to sit here and let any Honolulus run away with our daughter. They must marry her properly."

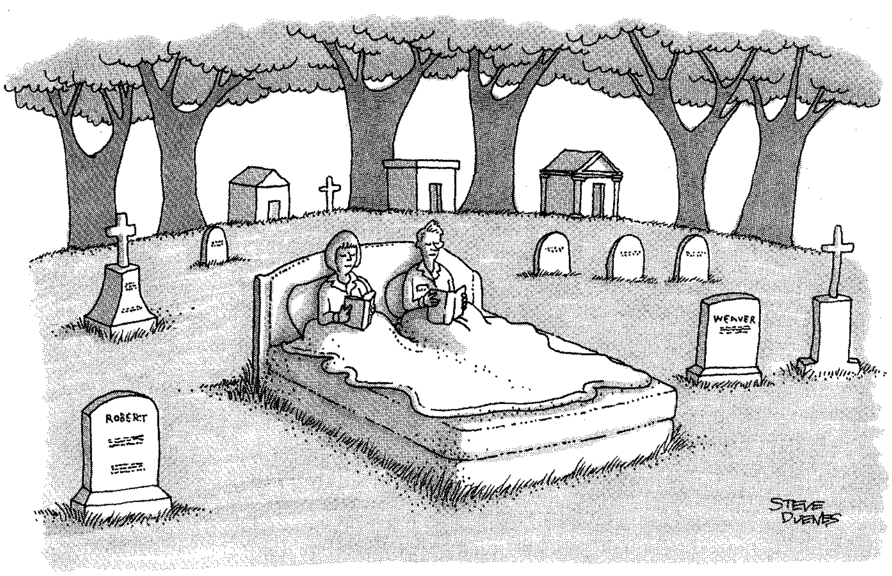
"You should talk," Mama said. "Did you come to my father's house for my hand?"

"Nobody pays for trouble," Baba said. "You're trouble. If I just touch you, you get pregnant. If I even look at you—twins, just like that. Too, too ripe."

"Me am always the problem," Mama said, her voice rising.

"All me am saying is we must to treat the tourist well."

Atieno was shivering; her hand was poking out of the shack. Baba yanked it back in and stuck her head through the biggest hole in the middle of our blanket. That was our way of insuring that the family member who most needed warmth maintained his place in the center of the blanket. Baba grabbed Otieno's legs and pushed them through two holes on the fringe of the blanket. "Children of Jaguar," he whispered into their ears. "Ex-mas *ya* Jag-uar." He tried to tuck Atieno and Otieno properly into the blanket, turning them this way and that, without success. Then he became impatient and rolled them toward each other like a badly



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wrapped meat roll. Their heads were facing opposite directions, their feet in each other's face, their knees folded and tucked into each other's body—a blanket womb.

Mama reminded him to wedge the door, but he refused. He wanted us to wait for Maisha. He winked at me as if I were the co-sentry of our fortune. Mama handed Baby to me and lay down. I sat there, sniffing *kabire*, until I became drunk. My head swelled, and our roofwork relaxed and shook, then melted into the sky.

I was floating. My bones were inflammable. My thoughts went out like electric currents into the night, its countercurrents running into each other, and, in a flash of sparks, I was hanging on the door of the city bus, going to school. I hid my uniform in my bag so that I could ride free like other street children. Numbers and letters of the alphabet jumped at me, scurrying across the page as if they had something to say. The flares came faster and faster, blackboards burned brighter and brighter. In the beams of sunlight leaking through the holes in the school roof, I saw the teacher writing around the cracks and patches on the blackboard like a skillful *matatu* driver threading his way through our pothole-ridden roads. Then I raced down our lopsided, bald field with an orange for a rugby ball, jumping the gullies and breaking tackles. I was already the oldest kid in my class.

Mama touched my shoulders and relieved me of the infant. She stripped Baby of the plastic rompers, cleaned him up, and put him in a nappy for the night. With a cushion wrested from Naema, who was sleeping, Mama padded the top of the carton into a cot. After placing Baby in it, she straightened the four corners of the carton and then folded up our mosquito net and hung it over them. It had been donated by an N.G.O., and Baba had not had a chance to pawn it yet. Then Mama wrapped her frame around the carton and slept.

I woke Baba up when Maisha returned, before dawn. He had been stroking his rosary beads, dozing and tilting till his head upset the mosquito netting. Mama had to continually elbow or kick him off. And each time he opened his eyes with a practiced smile, thinking the Jaguar hour had arrived. The rain had stopped, but clouds kept the night dark. The city had gorged itself on the floods, and its skin had swelled and burst in places. The makeshift tables and stalls of street markets littered the landscape, torn and broken, as if there had been a bar fight. Garbage had spread all over the road: dried fish, stationery, trinkets, wilted green vegetables, plastic plates, wood carvings, underwear. Without the usual press of people, the ill-lit streets sounded hollow, amplifying the smallest of sounds. Long after a police car had passed, it could be heard negotiating potholes, the officers harassing and extorting their bribes—their Ex-mas *kitu kidogo*—from the people who could not afford to go to their up-country villages for the holidays.

Maisha returned in an old Renault 16 taxi. She slouched in the back while the

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"So … and *musungu*?" Baba asked t… ver, peering into the shabby car as ı… might be transformed at any moment.

"What Jaguar? What *musungu*?" the driver asked, monitoring Maisha's movements.

"The *nini* Jaguar . . . where is my daughter coming from?" Baba asked him.

"Me, I can't answer you that question," he told Baba, and pointed to his passenger.

She bent in front of the only functioning headlamp to count out the fare. Her trousers were so tight that they had crinkled on her thighs and pockets; she struggled to get to the notes without breaking her artificial nails, which curved inward like talons. Yesterday, her hair had been low-cut, gold, wavy, and crisp from a fresh perm. Now it stood up in places and lay flat in others, revealing patches of her scalp, which was bruised from the chemicals. It was hard to distinguish peeling face powder from damaged skin. To rid herself of an early outbreak of adolescent pimples, she had bleached her face into an uneven lightness. Her eyelids and the skin under her eyes had reacted the worst to the assorted creams she was applying, and tonight her fatigue seemed to have seeped under the burns, swelling her eyes.

The driver could not easily roll up the window. He reached out to guard the food bags, his collateral. Baba brought out a six-inch nail and went for the worn tires. "What *dawa* have you given my daughter? She always comes home strong."

The driver crumpled immediately, his pleas laden with fright. "*Mzee*, my name is Karume. Paul Kinyanjui wa Karume. . . . Me, I be an upright Kenyan. I fear God."

"And you want to steal my daughter's bags?"

"No. Please, take the bags. Please," the man begged, trying to restrain Baba from bursting his tires.

"*Aiie*, Baba. You shame me. Shut up," Maisha said weakly, pushing the money toward the driver.

Baba collected the bags and strolled from the road, his nose full of good smells, until he suddenly broke into a run, to untie the trunk before Maisha reached the shack.

The driver got into his car and was about to put the money into his breast pocket when he started frisking himself. Baba stood watching from the door of the shack. Soon it was as if the driver had soldier ants in his clothes. He unzipped his pockets, then zipped them again quickly, as if the thief were still lurking. He removed his coat, then his shirt, and searched them. He recounted his itinerary to the skies with eyes closed, his index finger wagging at invisible stars. He searched his socks, then he got down on all fours, scouring the wet ground. He dabbed at the sweat, or tears, running down his face. "Where is my money?" he said to Maisha, finally finding his voice. "*Haki*, it was in my pocket now, now."

Maisha charged forward and screeched at Baba until his stern face crumbled into a sheepish grin. He returned the fat wad of notes, giggling like the twins. The driver thanked her curtly, brushing his clothes with trembling hands. As soon as he'd reconnected the ignition wires to start the car, he creaked off, his horn blaring, his headlamp pointing up and to the left like an unblinking eye.

Maisha staggered into the shack, holding her perilously high heels over her shoulders. Mama had made room for her and the bags, and had sprayed our home with insecticide to discourage mosquitoes. My siblings inside started to cough. As Maisha came in, Mama stood aside like a maid, wringing her hands. I could not look Maisha in the eye and did not know what to say.

"Good night, Maisha," I blurted out.

She stopped, her tired body seized by shock. She searched my parents' faces before tracing the voice to me.

"Who told you to talk?" she said.

"You leave full time, I run away. No school."

"You are going to school," Maisha said. "Tuition is ready."

"Run away? Jigana, shut up," Baba said. "You think you are family head now? 'All are leaders' causes riots. Stupid, *mtu dufu!* Nobody is leaving."

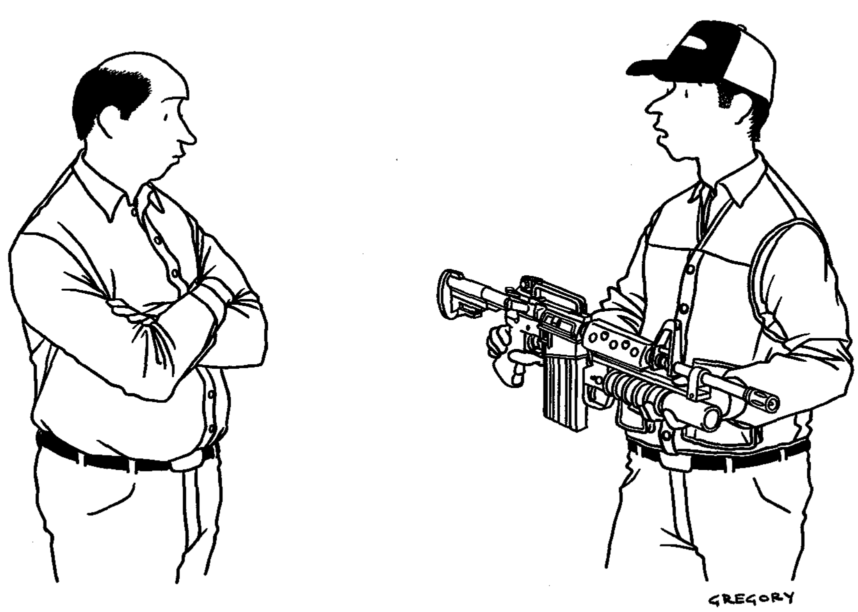
Maisha glared at us, and we all turned our backs to her as she opened the trunk to take out a blanket. The sweet smell of her Jaguar adventures filled the shack, overpowering the heavy scent of insecticide. Though her arrivals always reminded us that life could be better, tonight I hated the perfume.

"Me and your mama don't want 'full time,' Maisha," Baba said, picking his nails. "We refuse."

"Our daughter, things will get better," Mama said. "Thanks for cancelling our debt!"

"You are welcome, Mama," Maisha said.

Mama's face lit up with surprise, she was so used to being ignored. She opened her mouth to say something, but nothing came out. Finally, she sobbed the words



"Since I don't have a family, I pretty much use it to protect my other guns."

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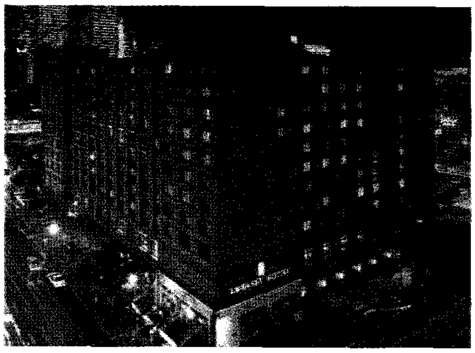

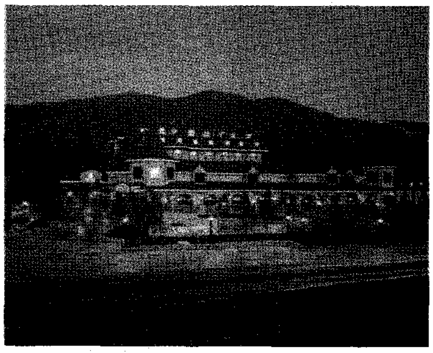

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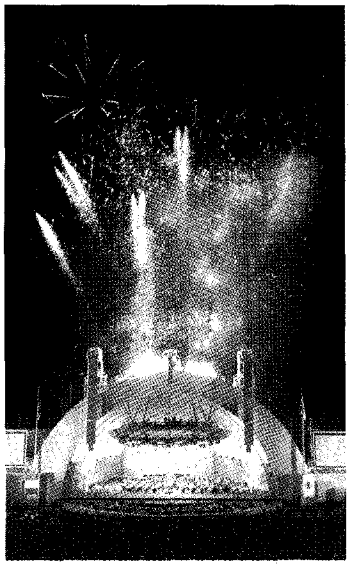

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"*Asante*, Maisha, *asante* for everything!" and bowed repeatedly, her hands held before her, as if in prayer. The women looked into each other's eyes in a way I had never seen before. They hugged and held on as if their hands were ropes that tied their two bodies together. In spite of the cold, beads of sweat broke out on Mama's forehead and her fingers trembled as she helped Maisha undo her earrings and necklace. Mama gently lay her down.

I believed that Mama might have been able to persuade her to stay, but then Baba signalled to Mama to keep quiet so that he could be the negotiator.

"Our daughter," Baba said, "you need to rest and think carefully. As our people say, north *ama* south, east *ama* west, home the best. . . ."

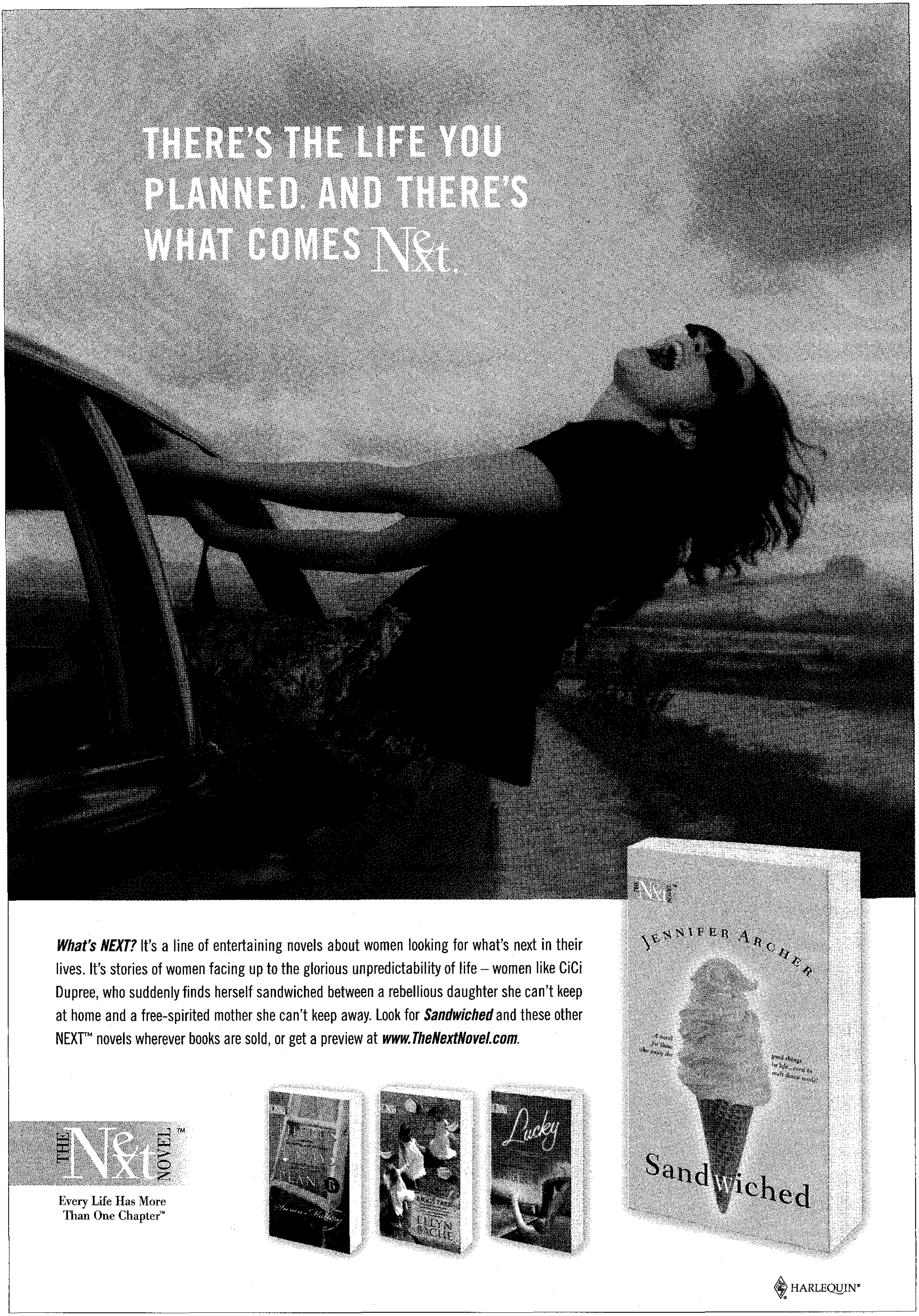
"Maisha, no school for me!" I said. "I told Mama and Baba. They will return fee to you."

"Jigana, please, please, don't argue," Maisha said. "Even you. You cannot even pity me this night? Just for a few hours?"

My parents sat outside, on the paint containers. I stood by the wall, away from them. I wanted to see Maisha one more time before she disappeared.

Fog brought the dew down, thickening the darkness and turning the security lights into distant halos. We could hear Maisha twist and turn on the floor, cursing the limbs of her siblings and swatting at the mosquitoes. It was as if we were keeping a vigil of her last night with us. We were restless, the silence too heavy for us. Baba mumbled, blaming himself for not going more often to sweep the church premises. He agreed with Mama that if he had swept daily, instead of every other day, St. Joseph the Worker would have bettered our lot. Mama snapped at him, because Baba had always told her that he was not interested in St. Joseph's favor but in a clean place for people to worship. Then Baba blamed her for no longer attending the KANU slum rallies to earn a few shillings.

The night degenerated into growls and hisses. I preferred the distraction of the quarrel to the sound of Maisha's uneasy breathing. When she clapped one more time and turned over, Mama couldn't stand it anymore. She rushed inside, took the mosquito net off the carton, and tied it to the rafters so that my sister was inside it. She sprayed the place again and brought Baby out to breast-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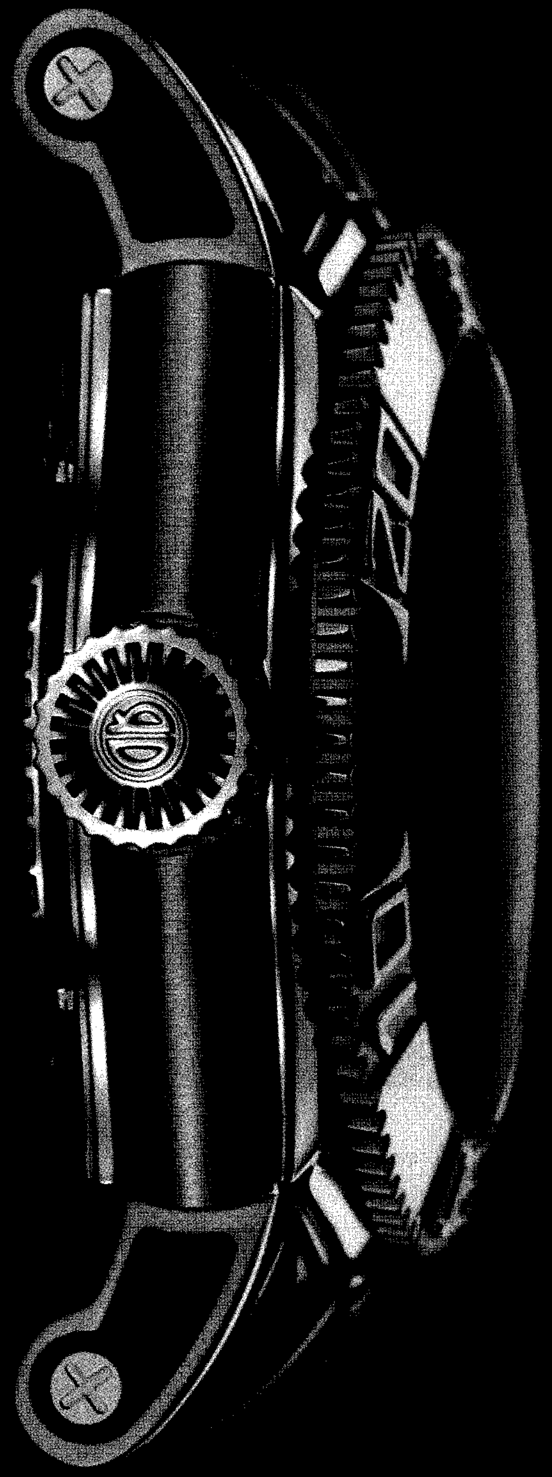

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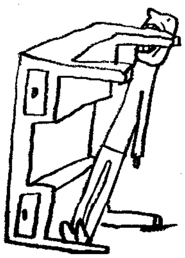
feed. The coughing got worse. Baba tore down some of the walls to let in air. Since the wind had subsided, it was of no use. He picked up the door and used it as a big fan to whip air into the shack.

In the morning, Atieno and Otieno came out first. They looked tired, and were sniffling from the insecticide. They stood before us, spraying the morning with yellow urine, sneezing and whimpering.

The streets began to fill. The street kids were up and had scattered into the day like chickens feeding. Some moved about groggily, already drunk on *kabire*. One recounted his dreams to others at the top of his voice, gesticulating maniacally. Another was kneeling and trembling with prayer, his eyes shut as if he would never open them again. One man screamed, and pointed at two kids, who were holding his wallet. No one was interested. His pocket was ripped to the zipper, leaving a square hole in the front of his trousers. He pulled out his shirt to hide his nakedness, then hurried away, an awkward smile straining his face. There was no sun, only a slow ripening of the sky.



The twins started to wail and to attack Mama's breasts. Baba spanked them hard. They sat on the ground with pent-up tears they were afraid to shed. Naema broke the spell. She came out and sat with me on the containers, grabbed my hands, and tried to cheer me up. "You are too sad, Jigana," she said. "You want to marry the gal? Remember, it's your turn to take Baby out."

"Leave me alone."

"Marry me, then—me am still here." She stuck out her tongue at me. "I'm your sister, too—more beautiful. Guy, do me photo trick . . . smile." She was well rested and had slept off her initial shock at Maisha's departure. Now she was herself again, taunting and talkative, her dimples deep and perfect. "You all must to let Maisha go."

"And you?" I said. "You only listen to Maisha."

"I'm big gal now, guy. Breadwinner. If you want school, I pay for you!"

She blew me a kiss in the wind. Maisha's creams were already lightening her ebony face.

Before I could say anything, Naema erupted with mad laughter and ran into the shack. She almost knocked Baba down as she burst out with the bags of food we had forgotten. She placed them on the ground and tore into them, filling the morning with hope, beckoning all of us on. Baba bit into a chicken wing. Mama took a leg. The rest of us dug into the sour rice, mashed potatoes, salad, hamburgers, pizzas, spaghetti, and sausages. We drank flat Coke and melted ice cream all mixed up. With her teeth, Naema opened bottles of Tusker and Castle beer. At first, we feasted in silence, on our knees, looking up frequently to monitor one another's intake like squirrels. None of us thought to inflate the balloons or open the cards that Maisha had brought.

Then the twins fell over on their backs, laughing and vomiting. As soon as they were done, they went straight back to eating, their mouths pink and white and green from ice cream and beer. We could not get them to keep quiet. A taxi pulled up and Maisha came out of the shack, dragging her trunk behind her. Our parents paused as the driver helped her put it into the car. My mother began to cry. Baba shouted at the streets.

I sneaked inside and poured myself some fresh *kabire* and sniffed. I got my exercise book from the carton and ripped it into shreds. I brought my pen and pencil together and snapped them, the ink spurting into my palms like blue blood. I got out my only pair of trousers and two shirts and put them on, over my clothes.

I avoided the uniform package. Sitting where the trunk had been, I wept. It was like a newly dug grave. I sniffed hastily, tilting the bottle up and down until the gum came close to my nostrils.

As the car pulled away with Maisha, our mourning attracted kids from the gangs. They circled the food, and I threw away the bottle and joined my family again. We struggled to stuff the food into our mouths, to stuff the bags back inside the shack, but the kids made off with the balloons and the cards.

I hid among a group of retreating kids and slipped away. I ran through traffic, scaled the road divider, and disappeared into Nairobi. My last memory of my family was of the twins burping and giggling. ♦

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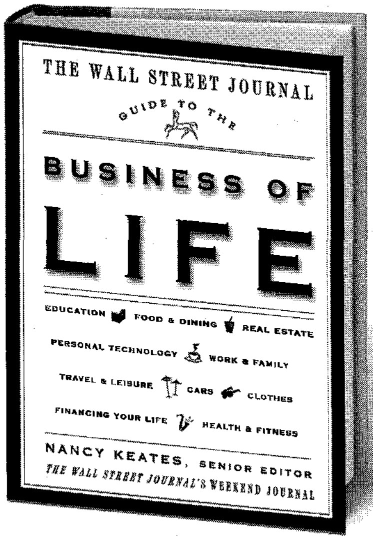

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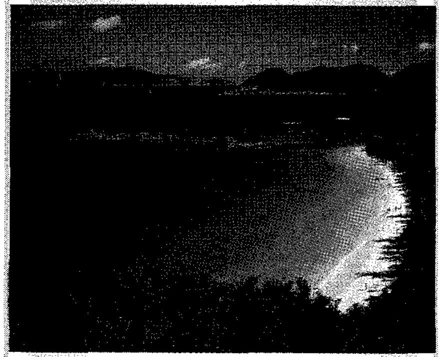

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PERSONAL HISTORY

MY WOMEN

Learning how to love them.

BY EDMUND WHITE

When a woman falls in love with me, I feel guilty. I am convinced that it's pure obstinacy that keeps me from reciprocating her passion. As I explain to her that I'm gay, it sounds, even to me, like a silly excuse; I scarcely believe it myself. In the past, when homosexuality was still considered shameful, I was slow to confess my desires to anyone—which made my reluctance to return women's affections seem all the more ill-natured: Who was I to reject an honest woman's love? Was what I was holding out for so much better?

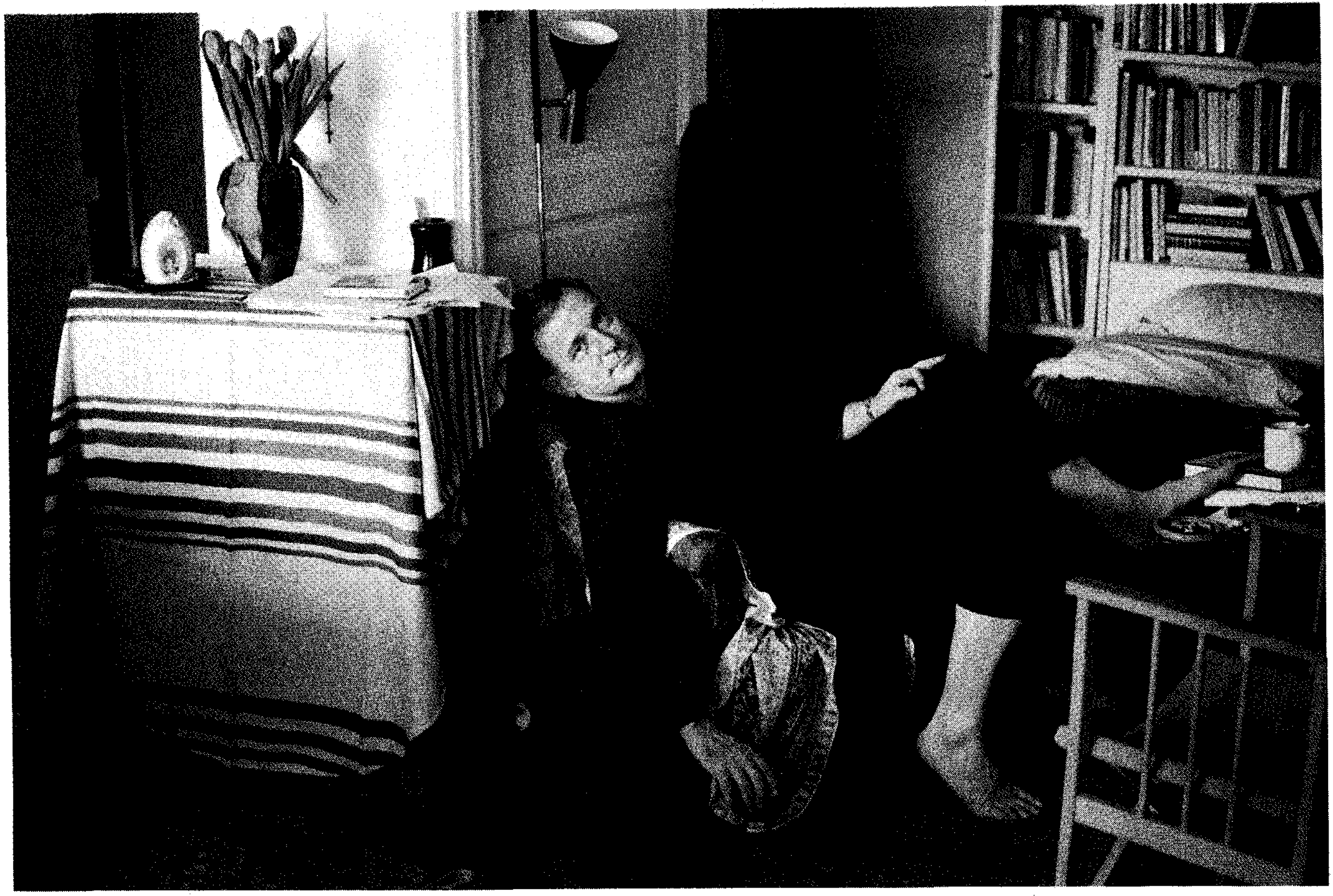
From my mother I learned just how violent and unquenchable a woman's loneliness can be. She had been sheltered excessively by her husband and then, midway through her life, they divorced, and she was forced to earn her own living. It was as if after hobbling around with bound feet she were suddenly unbandaged and told to become a marathon runner. She made her way professionally, and she took pleasure in that success, but she spent her evenings suffering beside a silent phone, drinking highballs and listening to the same sad record. Watching her, I came to think of men as monsters with absolute power, the darlings of the Western world, and of women as their unfortunate victims.

Unhappy women! How many of them I've known. Sniffling or drinking with big reproachful eyes, silent or complaining, violent or depressed—a whole tribe of unhappy women have always surrounded me. An anorexic fashion model I met while I was still in college would sob in the hallway outside my apartment door all night long. An Italian woman my age fell in love with me in 1970, the year I lived in Rome, and she suffered so much that she tried to run me down with her car. For most of my life I've been a shoulder to cry on, and all of that time I've wished I could do more to ease the pain of the women in my life. If I were straight, I could have married one of them. I would have known how to comfort her. I would have worked hard to provide her with the security and even the luxury she required. I would never have run off with another woman. I would have been as sensitive to her needs as a sister, as protective as a father. And I would always have told her where I was going and exactly when I'd be coming home. This was what distinguished me from the straight men I knew, who, it seemed, were united in their ability to treat women badly and then laugh it off.

For years and years I dated women, trying to go straight. My various shrinks would monitor my "progress" in becoming "intimate" or "mature" or fully "genital" (as opposed to "oral aggressive," where my development had, as I recall, been "arrested"). Oddly enough, most of the women I was drawn to weren't middle-class Midwestern sufferers like my mother. My women were foreigners or bohemians or artists—and even back then, in the fifties and sixties, they were strong and independent.

In grade school, when I was ten or eleven, I accompanied bland, well-brought-up girls to the movies on Saturday afternoon on "dates" that were our parents' idea of a harmless preparation for later, more perilous romantic encounters. Although I'd been a sweet three- or four-year-old, by this age I'd forgotten the urge to charm. In that youthful paradise, before I bit into the apple of social awareness, I had no idea that one could be ingratiating, seductive, or even more or less likable. I hadn't yet learned to ask flattering questions, to "draw people out," to express sympathy for their pain or encouragement for their pleasures, to exonerate their failings as "normal" or declare their modest successes "triumphs." Just as I had no idea what I looked like—and managed to stumble around ill-shod, badly dressed, unkempt, and often dirty—I had no notion that some people were more popular than others, much less that there were techniques one could acquire to win popularity. To be sure, I did sometimes fall under the spell of a Buster or a Howie or a Cam, but it seemed a miracle if one of them liked at least physically. They were segregated from us in gym class, and during our weekly ballroom-dancing session they were transformed by stiff organdie dresses, white gloves, shiny Mary Janes, and delicate circles of pink lipstick smudged into and then nearly wiped away from their cheeks.

In eighth grade, my attitude toward sessed by a demonic energy that would surge up and then quickly exhaust itself. She was hard and bold, then suddenly listless. I guessed that she'd been kissed by older men, high-school boys, even dropouts. Our Evanston girls, the daughters of local dentists or Northwestern professors, were for the most part dowdy and faintly withdrawn, al-



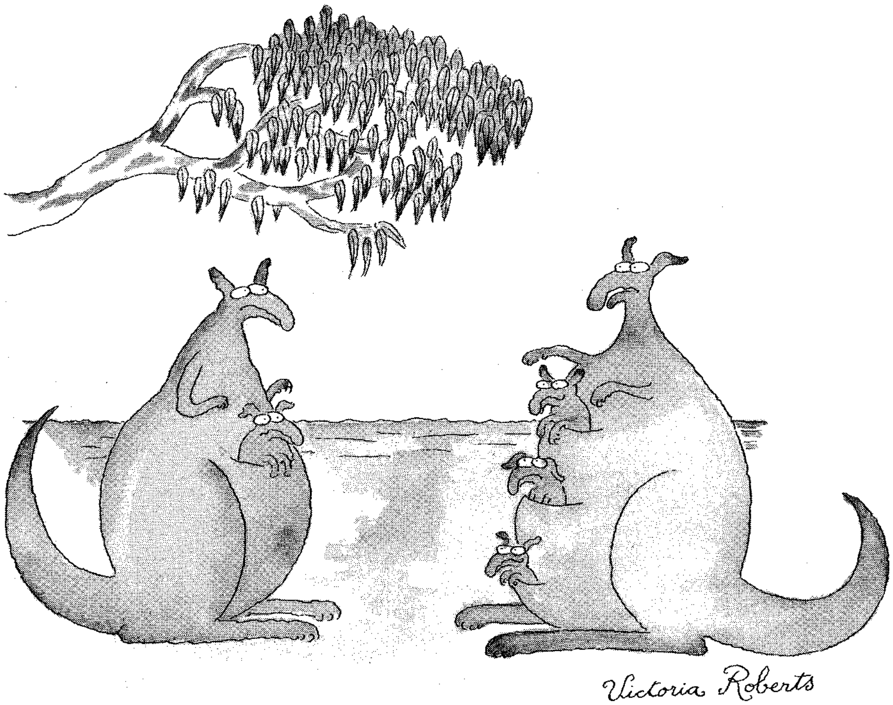
The author in Paris, in 1986. "Well into my twenties and even my thirties, I was still getting mixed up with unhappy women."

DAVID GWINNUTT

me back. It never occurred to me that friendship was biddable.

Even though I had not yet gone through puberty, I was already bedevilled by a fire in the crotch, an insatiable need to rub up against—well, against boys. I rolled in piles of autumn leaves with other boys, and wrestled for hours after school with one particular boy. I would never have tried to wrestle a girl into submission. Not that the girls at our school were frilly or beauty queens. They were tomboys or colorless wrens with knobby knees and imitation-tortoiseshell barrettes holding back limp hanks of hair. Their skinny pale arms pressed their books to their chests as they scurried along in full skirts and white bobby socks. But, even so, they seemed remote and mysterious, girls changed. I met an English girl who lived a block away from me and who was going to Nichols, the rough junior high in South Evanston, Illinois—which was quite different from Haven, the junior high in the rich part of town which my mother had somehow arranged for me to attend. I don't think I had ever met an English person before. I assumed that she would be in some way "aristocratic," imbued with Shakespeare, sensitive, refined, a tea drinker, mild-mannered. But Alice—I think that was her name—had a tough, nearly incomprehensible accent, small, discolored teeth, a habit of going from wheedling to sharp pokes in the side, a fund of dirty talk, and startlingly precocious ways. She was skittish, unfocussed, pos- most bovine in their matter-of-factness, whereas Alice would lead me into the garage under her building, press her hard pelvis against me, touch my erection, and giggle. She always wanted to kiss, sometimes uncritically, with closed eyes and fluttering tongue, sometimes with a rough, mocking aggressiveness. She'd rub my hand against her mons veneris, but only if I stayed outside her slick panties, which were an anemic, foreign pink. Just when we both became truly aroused, she'd slap my hand and slither away, laughing her shrill laugh.

I didn't completely approve of Alice. There was something coarse about her. I didn't want my girl friends from Haven, with their powder-blue cash-



"It's the middle one that's never happy."

• •

mere sweaters and expensive braces, to see me with her, to hear her shriek and notice her bad teeth. But she was nearly as exciting to me as a boy, and I can still feel her thin, eel-like body wriggling from my grasp.

In the roughshod horny world of boys, I had studied my companions closely to make sure that I wasn't being too "queer" for them. They didn't hesitate to press their hard-ons into my stomach through a double layer of denim, but they definitely didn't want to be called "pansies." Alice, too, was concerned by what people were saying about her. Would she get a reputation as a "slut"? All this fussing over labels was an obstacle to my obsessive needs. I wanted to be considered fast with girls. I dreaded being thought queer. I feared the label exactly as much as I longed for the reality of contact with other boys.

Alice moved away. I'd lost interest in her anyway; I dreamed of linking myself to a girl who was a famous beauty. As a freshman, I fell in love with Sally, one of the most popular girls at Evanston High. I had only one date with her, and that was a double date at the movies with my best friend, Steve, who was kindly trying to fix me up. I exchanged barely two words with Sally; instead, I listened as the three of them chatted about their friends, people I'd only seen or heard of.

Sally was celebrated for her big breasts and her face, which was that of the Apollo Belvedere—bow-shaped lips, a long, straight nose, a wide, domed brow, an ensemble that was classical and noble and oddly mature. She looked like a woman, a grownup woman, not a raddled adolescent. She said little, but she smiled dreamily with veiled eyes. Her smile had a way of lingering two beats too long, after the conversation had moved on to a different mood. Was she lost in her own thoughts and not paying attention? Had someone told her that she was at her best when she smiled? She never guffawed or squealed or made violent movements, though catty classmates told me that when boys weren't around she was a real sow, rolling on the floor, drinking beer, and giggling with the other girls at obscene speculations about penises they had known or divined through Speedos.

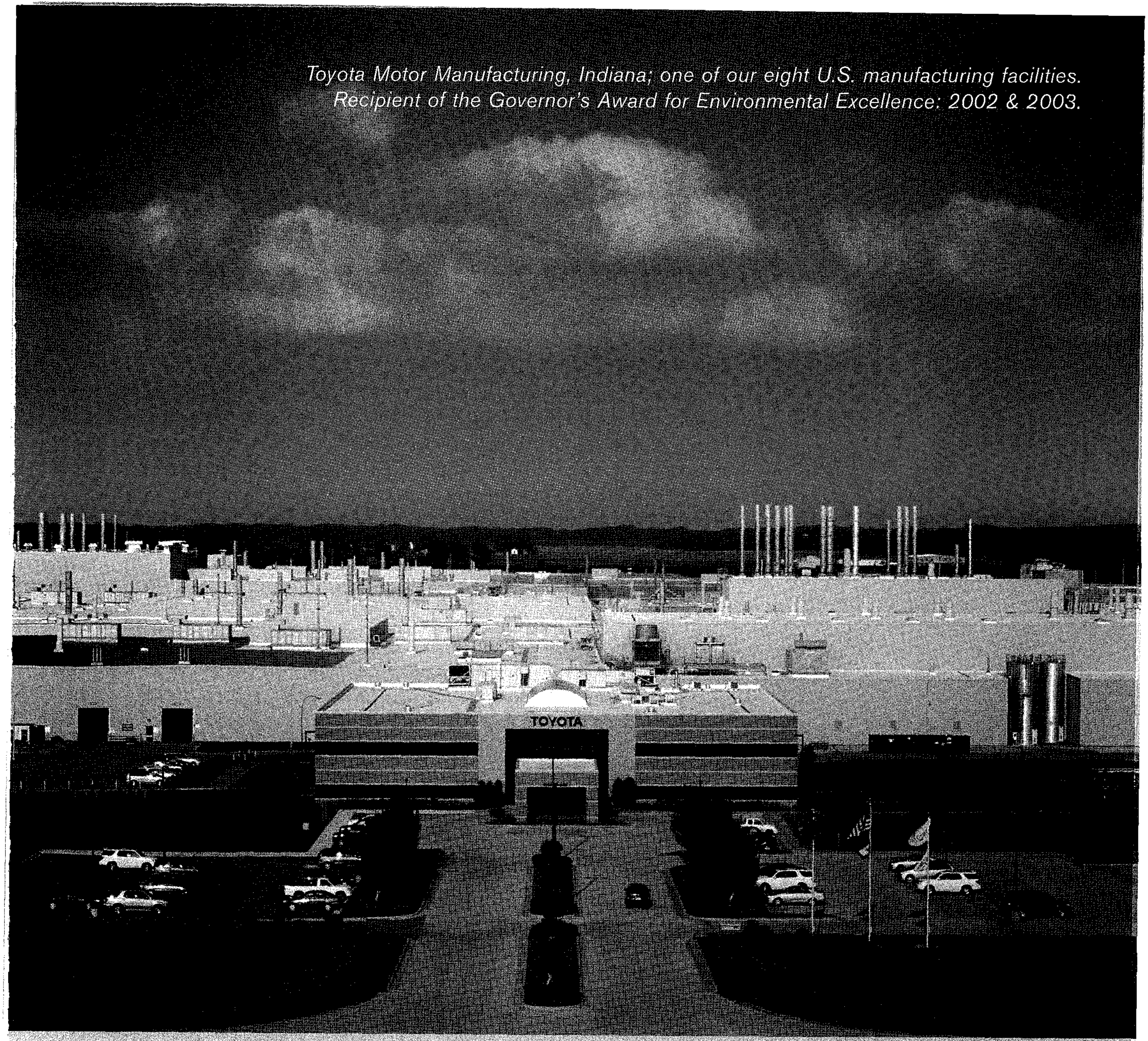
I had no idea then how boys wooed girls. I guessed it was a matter of joshing and shared nothings and hours of scuffing through autumn leaves and even more hours of clenches during the slow numbers at the sock hop. Popular girls, I knew, were won by boys who were brave on the playing fields. But I suppose that what later turned me into a writer—the belief that a few words in a particular order could work a magic spell, make an obscure person famous, a poor one rich, a nerd lovable—led me to profess my love to Sally in a long letter, written on heavy, yellowing paper meant to resemble parchment and penned with the italic lettering I'd been teaching myself.

Once this missive had been dispatched, my days (there were five of them) were spent in suspense and anxiety. I couldn't imagine Sally saying yes to me—and, if she did, what would I do then? What if she didn't write back at all? I was no better than my mother, sitting by the phone.

Being lonely for someone is much richer, more eventful, and more solitary than just being alone. I locked my bedroom door and made love to my pillow for hours, molding it into Sally's noble face, soft breasts, skinny hips. She always seemed so calm, I couldn't really picture her thrashing about in ecstasy. No one, straight or gay, had mentioned sexual technique to me yet. Just as well: one less worry. For me, love—at least, love on the sublime level where I encountered it—wasn't a matter of performance. It was the essence of one person communicating with the essence of another. That's why to be rejected in love was so cataclysmic: one had been judged and found wanting.

When I came home from school on Friday afternoon, the envelope was waiting for me. In some part of my mind I was surprised that I'd been able to make someone so important respond to me at all. Sally's handwriting was all circles and loops that twined around a straight but invisible guiding line. She told me that, alas, she thought of me not as a boyfriend but as a very dear friend—which, at first, struck me as more a promotion than a rejection.

At last something public and decisive was happening to me. People would talk about this. I wondered why such a signal event was occurring in such weak daylight, with no soundtrack beyond the whoosh of traffic on the wet road outside and the twittering of rainy-day birds. Closer to hand, there was the tick-



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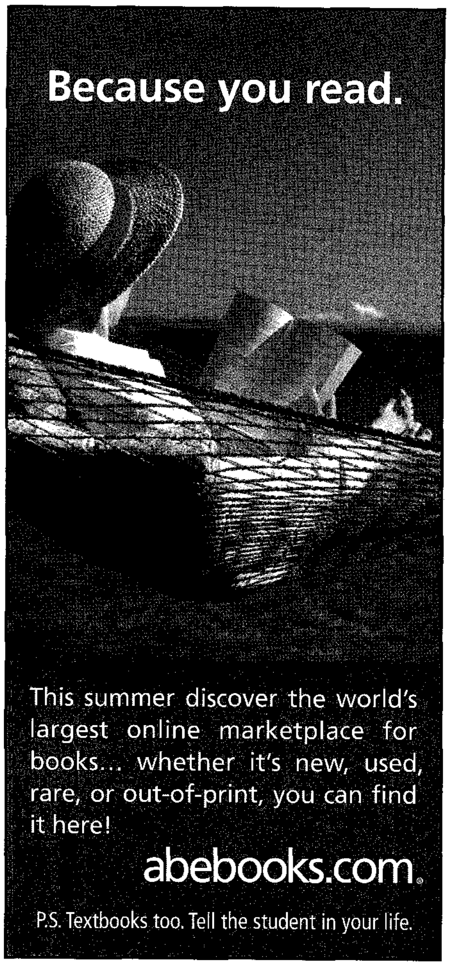

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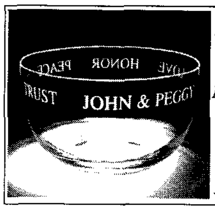

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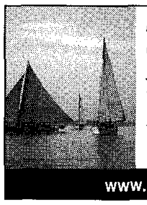

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tock of my mother's bedside clock in the next room, a little white face picked out in silver numerals and girded by blue sapphires.

If, in the afternoon, I was capable of reading about my fate with detachment, by that evening I had collapsed into heavy sobs that weighed down on me and got tangled around my legs like wet sheets. I rolled in a hot, dirty, humid mangle of humiliation. First love is so painful precisely because it has no precedents, no rules to break or confirm. One has not yet been inducted into a fraternity of shared sufferers, of seasoned and congenial losers. One must go it alone, the first angel ever to be cast out of Heaven.

Looking back, I can see that the women I loved, at least early on, were status symbols. I suppose, in that sense, I was my mother's true disciple. She'd taught me that a good man, though elusive, could transform one's whole life once he was caught. Like my mother, who entertained the burning hope that that nice guy from Santa Barbara, the one who'd awakened her with a cocktail shaker full of brandy Alexanders, would marry her and make her the rich mistress of a hacienda on the coast—like Mom, I'd expected Sally to make me handsome, popular, normal.

In the middle of my sophomore year, I was sent to boarding school, at the Cranbrook School for boys, in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, where I fell in love with Marilyn Monroe. I knew that she was the most beautiful woman in the world, and yet she was in pain, in need. She was unhappy. I believed that I could help her. My fantasies weren't specific as to what I would actually say to her or do for her. I never got beyond her little smiles of love and recognition, which burned with a brighter and brighter glow.

My favorite daydream was that she'd come with me to my senior prom. All the other guys would be astonished: the toad, Eddie White, was really a prince. I pictured her on my arm, her sequinned gown glittering, her voluptuous body undulating as we entered the dining hall, which had been transformed by crêpe paper into a ballroom. It was like a mermaid's visitation. The thin boys with their brush cuts and spotty faces, their dinner jackets and burgundy cummerbunds with matching bow ties, would gape at us. *No way, man, the biggest dweeb of them all with . . . Marilyn!*

In the end, I went to the dance with Gretchen Pifer, a beauty in her own right who had been voted the most photogenic girl in Toledo the year before. Gretchen's father was Bill Pifer, an old friend of my stepmother's. He was her dentist, and eventually we all travelled to Toledo to consult him. The Pifers lived in a big house that looked down on the Maumee River. It was a modern house with floating levels, lots of glass, and a central living area two stories high—dramatic, like everyone inside it. I didn't visit the Pifers often, but every second I passed with them germinated in my mind in the long, arid months that followed.

Compared with the silences of my father's house, the Pifers were endlessly chirping with sunny exuberance. Mrs. Pifer (Cathy, as I was urged to call her) had been a dancer in the Ziegfeld Follies, and she still thought of descending the stairs to join her guests as "making my entrance." She had an eccentric idea of good manners; she once called a local theatre director Mr. Shakespeare, pretending to do so by mistake, as though the confusion would indicate her enormous respect. She wasn't at all a narcissist, if narcissism means taking pleasure in one's own beauty. No, she cast a cold eye on time's inroads—the sagging chin, the pouchy eyes, the deepening marionette lines bracketing the mouth, the coarsening skin texture—and she sanded and spackled and painted them into invisibility. Though a vague sense of emergency hung in the air—as if Cathy might go mad tomorrow, or, more accurately, had gone mad yesterday—I never felt menaced by this possible loss of control. She wasn't crazy in the usual repetitious, soul-contracting, humiliating way. She was always fun—inspired, lunatic, playful.

Every second of the day at the Pifers' was tinged with fantasy—breakfast required an old feather hat, dark glasses, and a simple "day face." The food was chosen as if no one had ever broken a fast before ("Shall we pour orange juice on the strawberries? Shall we whip some cream for the rolls? That way, we can call them 'scones' "). The white blue-striped

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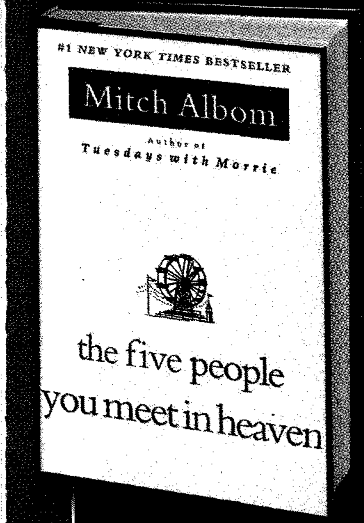
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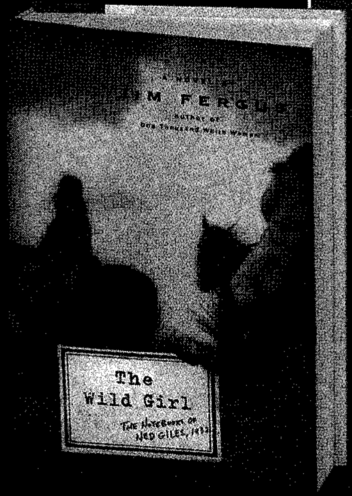
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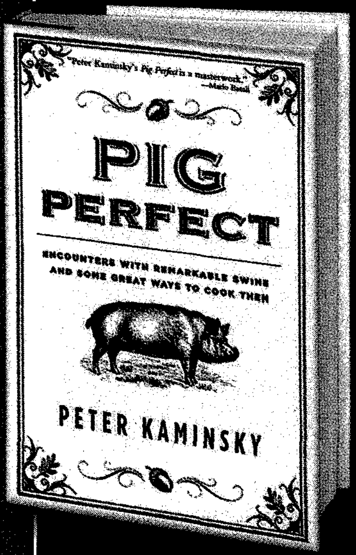
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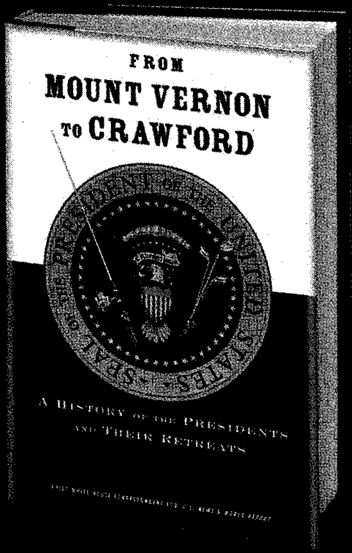
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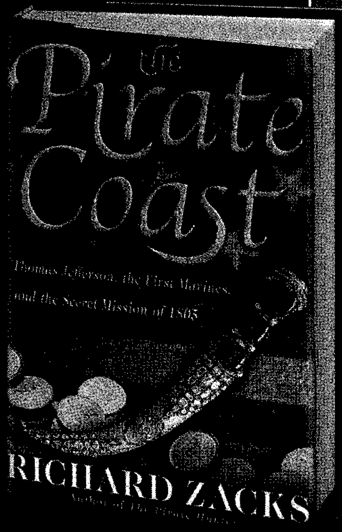
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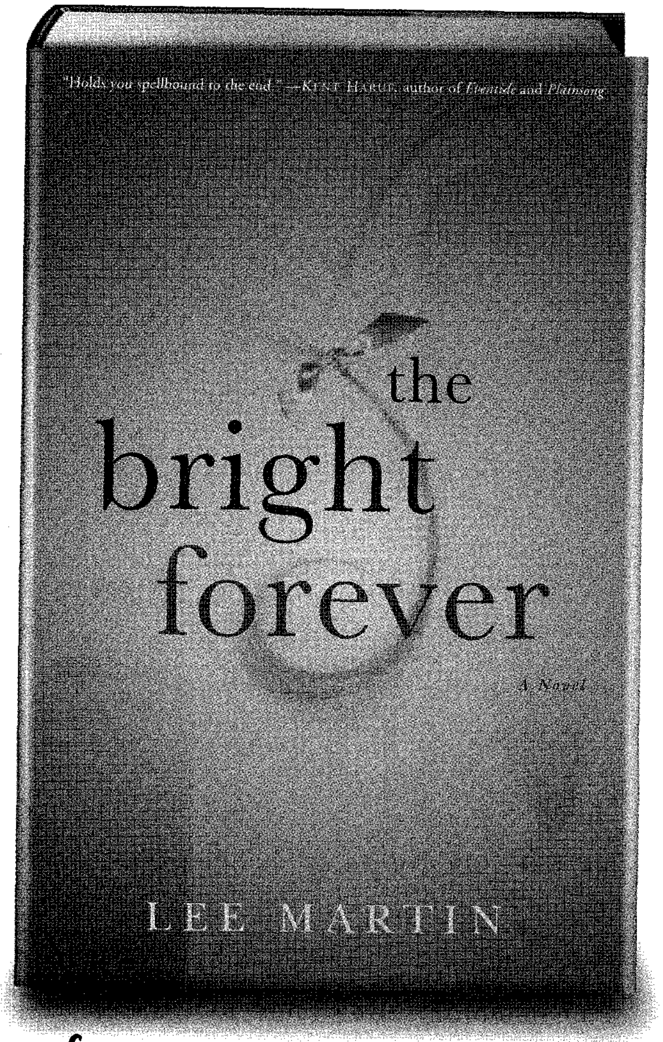
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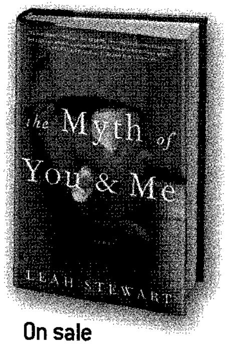
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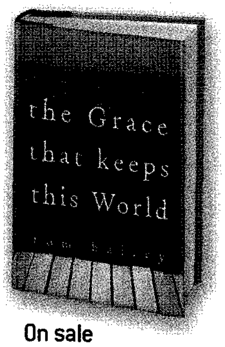
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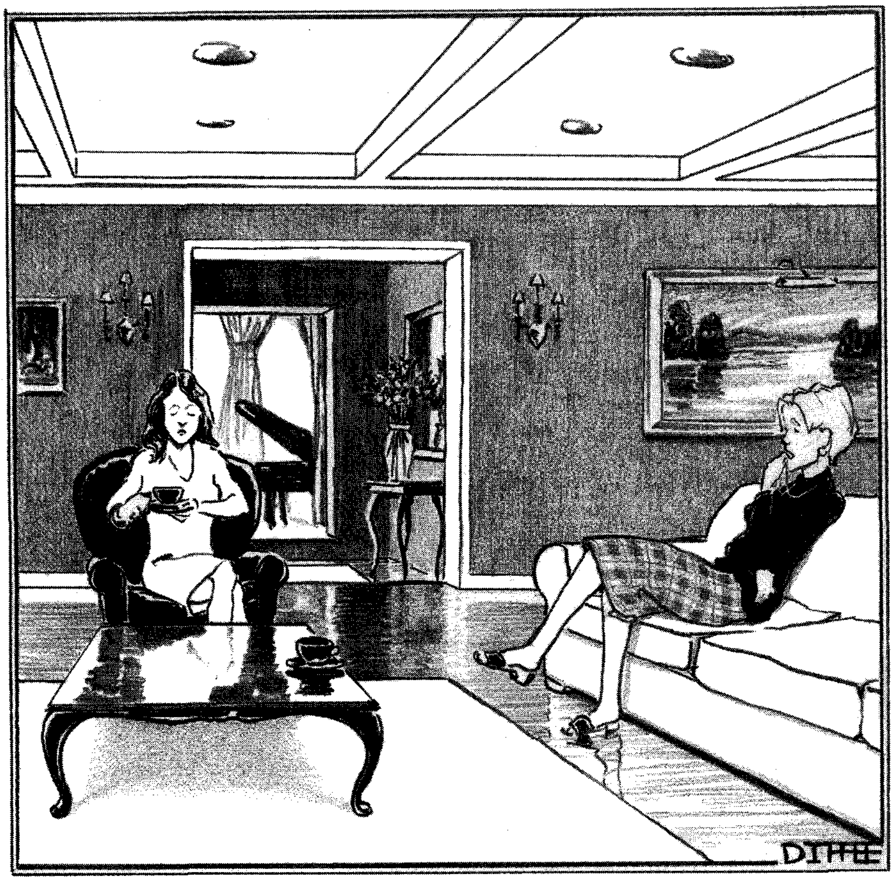
bowls and napkins were lifted out of a Matisse painting. Someone lit and sipped ineffectually at a Gauloise just for the blue smoke rising in the sunlight and the forbidden odor of adventure blending with the smell of coffee. Cathy teetered downstairs on very high heels, her hair swept up in a disintegrating "brioche," her eyes glistening with belladonna drops. She had an unfocussed, inconsequential giggle, whereas Gretchen had a raucous laugh that was at odds with her extravagant, slim beauty. Gretchen had a smoky croak of a voice. She and her mother did lots of imitations, notably of Baby Snooks's infantile piping in which "little" became "widdle."

While Cathy was twittering away in baby talk and Gretchen was laughing her bewitching shred of a laugh, Gretchen's older sister, Dee-Dee, stayed aloof: cool, classy, and intellectual. She was getting an advanced degree in Spanish, and on the mantelpiece in her room was a sumptuously bound edition of Rubén Darío's "Obras Completas," the works of the nineteenth-century poet from Central America she was studying. Whereas Gretchen wore layers of makeup and had long, complicated black locks, Dee-Dee was fresh-faced, with short dark-blond hair pushed back behind her ears. She'd read the just published "Bonjour Tristesse" in French and could have been its sophisticated young author, tooling along the Grande Corniche in a sports car. She, too, was funny, but in an under-the-breath, muted way. Once, I was standing next to Dee-Dee when a log in the fireplace suddenly popped; without a pause, she drew imaginary pistols, aimed at the fire, and muttered, "Dance, pardner."

Bill Pifer lived in this all-female world as a quiet, self-effacing provider. He was the nerd who'd landed the showgirl. Cathy called him Pooky, saying it with her lips pursed, leaning down from her spike heels to kiss his bald spot. She always assigned him a minor role in the non-stop theatricals, plopping a sombrero on his head or twisting a pink boa around his neck. He'd appear suddenly, pushing the temporary stage curtain aside and grinning sheepishly. "Oh, Pooky," Cathy would moan, catching my eye and winking. "I told you not to come out until Gretchen says, 'All hail, the



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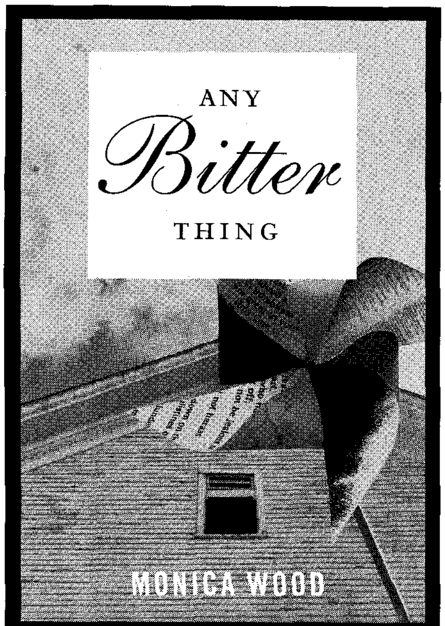

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sun is rising!' Pooky, you're hopeless," and she'd blow him a kiss and he'd look ashamed and pleased all at once.

When I visited him at his office, he was a different man, smocked in white, his breath thoughtfully sweetened as he stared into my mouth, his whispered commands silently obeyed by his sturdy assistant, his hands gentle and competent, his solicitude never to cause even the slightest pain so at odds with the sadism of most dentists I knew. His office had been strangely decorated by Cathy, but not even the Expressionist landscapes on the walls and the blown-glass marlins plunging out of a crystal sea in the waiting room could diminish the cool, expensive efficiency of Dr. Pifer's domain. The good doctor always had three patients going at once—while one was waiting for the novocaine to numb his mouth, another was biting down into a horseshoe of peppermint-flavored plaster, and a third was submitting to the cold spray of the new high-speed drill. But he would keep the others waiting so that he could speak more playfully to me, his blue eyes dancing, his tiny gray mustache twitching, his big soft hands squeezing my arm or stroking my fingers or thigh or even massaging my shoulders.

Was he attracted to me, to men? I dared not pose the question, since what I loved at the Pifers' was precisely the unspoken air of permissiveness, of fluidity, and a dull call for definition would have killed it.

During my last year at boarding school, I spent a long weekend in Toledo with the Pifers. There I met an unshaved young man, already a sophomore in college, who took me out for a ride. We parked along a country road, lit cigarettes, cracked the window open, and watched the November night rush in like a flock of crows. We half leaned against his door and sprawled out toward each other. We talked and talked. In those days, men spoke of their homosexuality rarely and at considerable peril. Perhaps he wasn't gay, but he was carrying some sort of burden. He sighed, he started to say something, he examined the tip of his cigarette as if it were the point of curiosity.

I remember that smoky parked car, the sharp slice of cold air behind my head, and the feeling of stalled frustration between us. It was one of my first adult moments, and I attribute it to the Pifers and that sensitive young man who moved slowly, bravely around them.

When I was still at Cranbrook, I met Marilyn Schaefer, a painting student at the adjoining Cranbrook Academy of Art. At my school, everything was stolidly, unreflectingly Midwestern. Half the boys were day students, sons of the local "automobility," and the other half lived in the dorms and were the neglected or problem children of rich families. The art-academy students across the street, who were usually graduate students, had beards and long hair or, if they were women, sandals and no makeup and unshaved legs hidden under peasant skirts. They listened to records of Wanda Landowska playing Bach on the harpsichord (God's seamstress, as we called her) or to twanging Indian ragas sliding up and down through a melisma of uncomfortably close chromatics. Whereas the boys' school was the Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen's daydream of a traditional English public school, complete with brick walkways and carved gargoyles, the art academy was his tribute to modernism, with gardens and low buildings oriented toward a high peristyle framing a fountain that represented the souls soothed by Orpheus in the underworld.

Marilyn was twenty-two and I was just fifteen, and, although now I recognize that part of my appeal for her must have been my precociousness, at the time I didn't play it up. I longed to be her equal, yet if something I said made her smile because I suddenly sounded like an old man or a little kid I was happy to have earned the extra affection. I would go to her studio and watch her paint while drinking the tea she brewed on her hot plate and listening to her talk about her enthusiasms—Marx, de Kooning, John Dewey, Walt Whitman. In the fifties, most people sneered at Whitman as a bardic blowhard; we liked small, tightly controlled impersonal lyrics filled with echoes of world culture that could be submitted to close reading—T. S. Eliot, in other words. Back then, American artists and thinkers still suffered from a national inferiority complex and thought of their countrymen as philistines. But

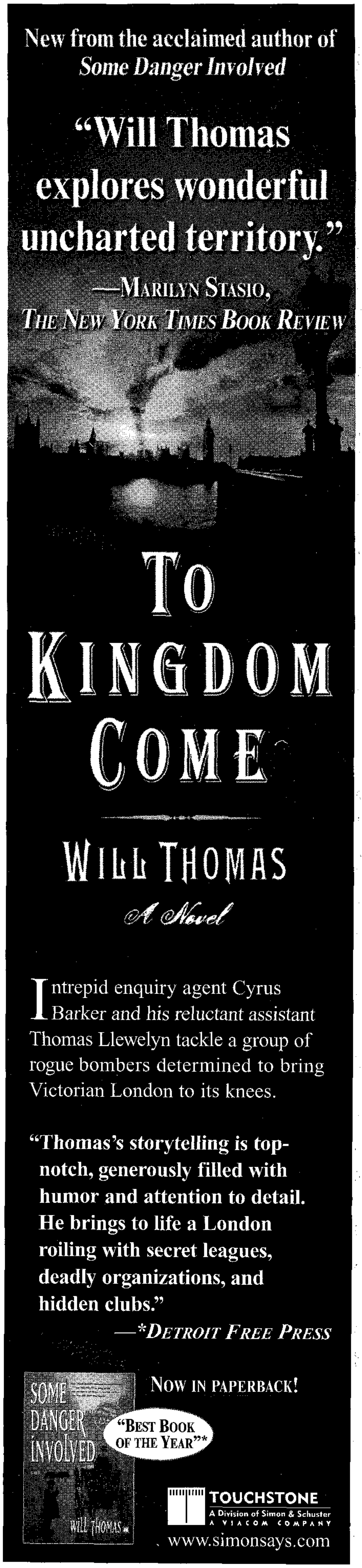
Marilyn liked America and American geniuses. She praised Whitman's democratic vistas, his sweeping inclusiveness, his rhetorical punch; she made those around her feel like small-minded pedants. She also liked Dewey's egalitarian principles and his bold educational reforms. In the same way, she embraced Theodore Dreiser and declared "Sister Carrie" a masterpiece, whereas for us his novels were baggy monsters, uninspired reworkings of Zola's naturalism, and (worst of all) corny and clunky. We liked irony, indeterminacy, bleakness, while she favored bluff directness, simplicity, health. It seemed strange to me that someone who painted big, scary abstractions should have been so commonsensical in her literary tastes, though later I would discover that twelve-tone composers read Keats just as experimental poets listened to Glenn Miller—few people are avant-garde outside their own domain.

I suppose that as Midwesterners, the children of chemical engineers and homemakers, we experienced the arts as so foreign, even so preposterously unreasonable, that once we'd decided to embrace them we did so with lots of conviction and little discrimination. Surely it was no accident that T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, the two great poetic synthesists of our day, the very men who had ransacked all of world culture and could refer in the same poem to the Buddha and to Sophocles or to Confucius and to Jefferson—it was no accident that they were both from the heartland. Public-library intellectuals, magpies of knowledge, like most autodidacts we were incapable of evaluating our sources. As a teen-ager, I tried to write verse like Milton's; later, I wanted to write novels like Nabokov's. In a novel I wrote in college, I imitated Evelyn Waugh. If someone had said to me, "But do you, the graceless son of a Cincinnati broker of chemical equipment, do you seriously imagine that you can just write a Renaissance Christian epic or something in the style of a Cambridge-educated Russian aristocrat or of the spokesman of the Bright Young Things of London circa 1925?"—if someone had spoken like this to me, I wouldn't even have understood his point.

I was intoxicated by the style of the Cranbrook Academy of Art. Everyone there was silent and seldom spoke above a whisper. When the students looked at one another's sculptures or paintings, they didn't feel compelled to produce automatic praise. Rather, they stared at each piece quizzically, for a long time, as if feeling it all over through long, sensitive antennae. Judgment was held in abeyance. No one was gossipy, since no one took notice of eccentricity or financial failure or adultery, the usual three subjects of gossip. All artists were meant to be oddballs; bohemia was a refuge for the *réfusés*. The Academy students subscribed to the code of honorable poverty for "martyrs to art," as they jokingly called themselves. And adultery—well, the very concept was too suburban even to mention, though, like everyone else, the students were subject to jealous fits and fights. Some burly, bearded sculptor, bare-chested and with an acetylene torch in hand, might slam into his birdlike rival, but no one would tut-tut when his girlfriend, the big-hipped Israeli potter, moved into his rival's bedroom.

The artists didn't read much, but they carried around talismanic books—Susanne K. Langer's "Philosophy in a New Key," the I Ching in the fancy Bollingen edition with the introduction by Jung, "The Songs of Maldoror," by the self-named Comte de Lautréamont. There were very drunken parties held downtown in Detroit by the favorite black male model with the tweezed eyebrows in his rabbit warren of an apartment. All the male painters and sculptors would drink jug wine and beer and declare their sodden love to the same Wisconsin farm girl, a lithographer, her reddish-blond hair twisted in plaits above eyebrows that were blond to the point of invisibility and lips so bloodless they made her teeth look yellow.

Marilyn loved all this craziness, but after her own cool fashion. She tied her white men's shirt in front to reveal a sliver of pale midriff above her black jeans. She puffed amateurishly on cigarettes. All evening, she nursed the same glass of bad wine. She danced a bit by herself in the corner to a wailing Brenda Lee record, but it was obvious that she couldn't dance—she had the white girl's embarrassing habit of bran-



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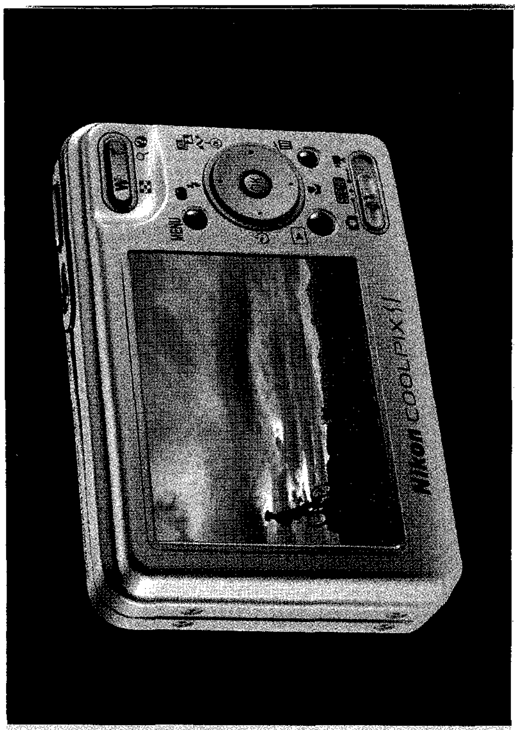

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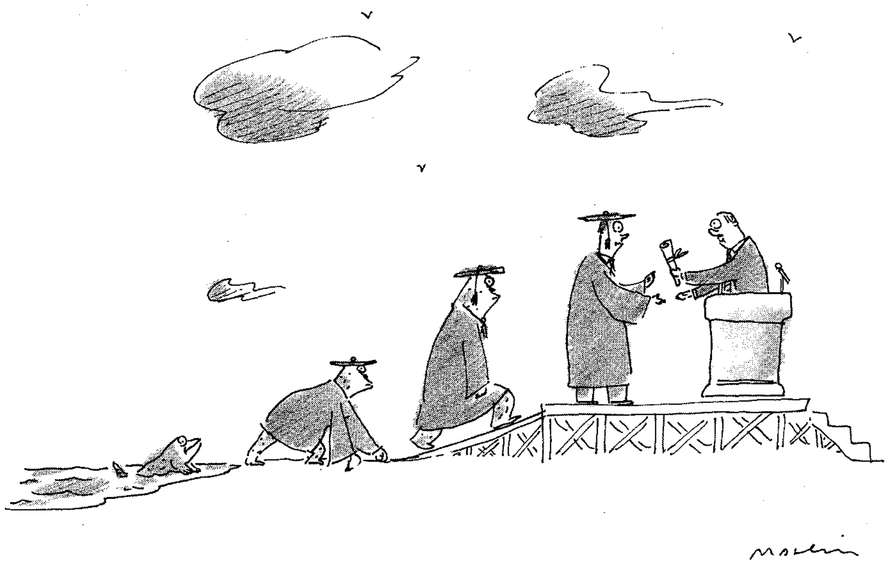

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dishing an invisible tambourine. And she was the one who ended up necking in the corner with the coveted Wisconsin girl.

I stole glances at them, confused because Marilyn was also going out with an easygoing artist named Jay, a tall, bearded man whose neck and forearms were so massive and hairy that he looked like a beast caught in a man's shirt. He played the violin; Marilyn said that he and his brothers and their immigrant Jewish father played Mozart and Beethoven in their little Lower East Side apartment. Jay seemed permanently amused by everyone's exaggerations and failings and an ironic smile never left his lips. He and Marilyn were lovers, but this was never said in so many words. Explicitness about one's romantic arrangements had apparently been deemed gauche. In my middle-class teen-age world, the whole apparatus of going steady, exchanging ID bracelets, smooching at dances, fighting, breaking up, submitting to the arbitration of friends—that was the point, the public drama, whereas at the art academy the heterosexuals were as furtive as the homosexuals. Even that distinction would have seemed primitive to them, since the unstated ideal appeared to be bisexuality, or, as it was called in that Freudian time, "polymorphous perversity."

I spent the long, hot summer with my father in Cincinnati, during which I worked as a clerk at the haberdasher's where my father got his suits, stacking and restacking dress shirts. At the beginning of August, I got a letter from Marilyn. I reread it many times. She was writing obituaries for a union newspaper in Iowa for the summer, and she discussed her investigations into the nature of the paper's readership. One of the three editors was Alvin Toffler, who years later would write "Future Shock."

She started a new paragraph, "To use Aristotle's categories, what are you doing, thinking, and making?" I was doing nothing but pushing a broom and folding shirts, my thoughts were all vague and tormented, and I was making little beyond writing a few pages of a novel about my mother's sex life for my advanced English class. But I was thrilled to receive this casual reference to socialism in McCarthy's America and to Aristotle in the land of know-nothings—and to have this chatty letter from my sophisticated older friend.

The art academy was usually just a one-year program, but Marilyn came back for a second year while I was still at Cranbrook. Jay was gone, and although I was seven years younger than she, a hint of love and even of sex made itself felt. We mainly loved talking—often about whether art should be for art's sake or whether it should advance the cause of the revolution. I learned that Marilyn had been brought up by parents from Amana, Iowa, the German Pietist colony. They spoke English with a heavy German accent, though they were born in the United States; indeed, the colony had been in America since the middle of the nineteenth century. The residents of Amana believed in continual revelation, and, well into the twentieth century, God had spoken directly to various old men and women in the community, whose outpourings in German (usually about the details of everyday life or other people's character flaws) had been written down by devoted scribes. The boys and girls were kept apart, even in church, and if a young couple announced that they wished to marry it was a cause for sadness. They were separated. At the end of a year, if the two persisted in their folly they were allowed to marry in a melancholy ceremony. Modesty and self-effacement were regarded as the highest state, and bringing children into the world as a tragic mistake.

Marilyn's father had worked at Amana as a carpenter. When he and his wife left the colony and moved to Davenport, he became a builder and a Lutheran. But he remained faithful to Amana's ideals, although he despised its monastic strictures. He was a gentle man, his wife even gentler, and both of them had a satiric sense of humor. Mr. Schaefer, however, refused to believe anything bad about Germany.

Marilyn hated religion or any dogma. When friends and family members bowed their heads to pray at Thanksgiving, I could tell her blood pressure was rising. She was shocked when her sister and her older brother converted to Catholicism, especially since that brother had been a Communist sympathizer and a member of Harry Bridges' longshoremen's union. I embraced Freudianism, and once, while I was parroting Freud's doctrines over dinner, Marilyn exploded. She told me that I was ruining my mind with such shallow, unscientific trash. I smiled condescendingly at her need to "resist," until in a flash of enlightenment as sudden as Gautama's I saw through all the pretenses of psychoanalysis—its sterile reductiveness, its hostility to unscripted experience, its vulgar mechanistic recourse to so many ergs of energy stored in the anus or some such tomfoolery.

Marilyn (she seems to have forgotten this) and I once tried to be lovers, because I thought we should be all things to each other and should eventually marry. I even wrote my first published short story about her—"Goldfish and Olives," which was published in an anthology called "New Campus Writing." Later, I would write about her often, calling her Maria. One weekend when I was at college in Ann Arbor, she came to visit me and we kissed passionately and undressed, but I was impotent. Today, there are pills for that, and behavioristic exercises; I sometimes wonder whether, if I'd been able to perform then and with other women, I would be married today. And, if so, would I be happier than I am now?

In Ann Arbor, I fell in with a fat, beautiful student named Anne Hall. She liked me to call her by the full "Anne Hall," just as she always addressed me as "Ed White." Our one-syllable first names were too short to go unaccompanied into the world, she joked.

Anne had rented an old, falling-down wooden house in Ann Arbor and furnished it with broken-backed armchairs and spavined couches. She was a painter and had set up an easel in the living room. The easel and the wood floor were spattered with oil paint of every color, the smell of paint and turpentine complementing the taste of the retsina we drank at a party Anne threw for a Greek poet. She'd read somewhere that a Greek male is not a man until he has cooked his first lamb. She barrelled into Detroit, thirty miles away, in her Volkswagen and came back with a headless, hoofless, and skinless lamb. She improvised a spit in her back yard over a bed of bricks and coals. The poet had to turn the blasted thing for hours as we gulped down cases of retsina and danced sideways in long lines, our hands linked by white handkerchiefs.

Anne was from a rich family, but she cared not at all about her social position or material objects. I suppose she always thought that she would soon go on a diet and, when she was thin, buy a new wardrobe. In the meantime, she'd pull down an Indian print, which was tacked up as a curtain, and wrap it around herself and fix it in place with a battered police badge. She also wore a white painter's smock, the sleeves stiff with dripping colors, her pudgy, pretty hands cerulean blue or madder pink, a wild

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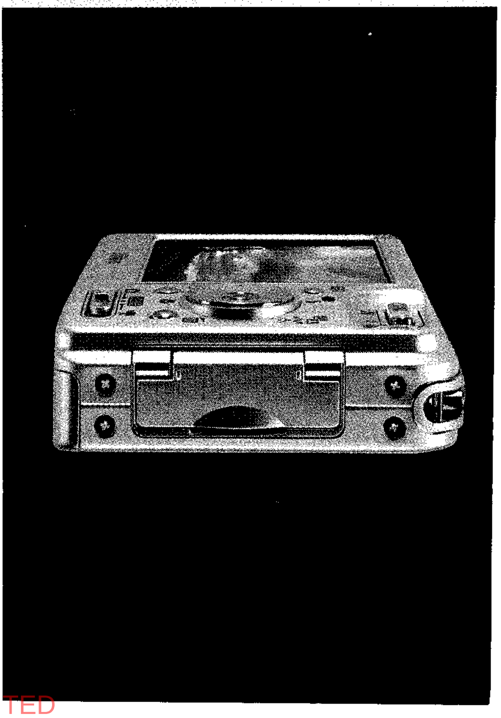

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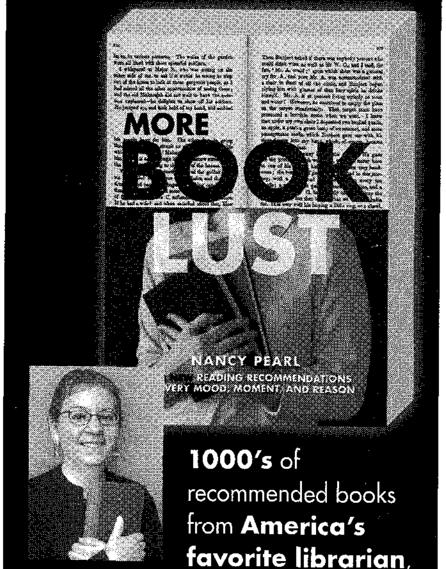

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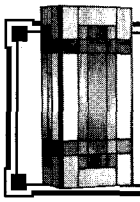

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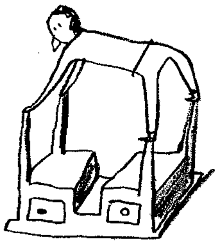
dash of cadmium yellow licking her forehead.

She was often lost in her own thoughts and not really paying attention to what I was saying. I'd be looping forward and backward in my indirect, parenthetical, self-commenting style, getting tangled up in chains of qualifiers and contradictions, when Anne Hall would suddenly realize that she had blanked out on my last reversal of all that had preceded and she'd bite her lip and unfocus her eyes and shake her head as if to free it from the cobwebs. Sometimes she would blow a strand of hair up out of her face.

She wasn't a thinker in any organized way, but as an artist she had the distinct conviction that she should not just laugh and clown all the time, which was her natural bent. Maybe because she came from a "social" family and had lovely manners, she had to resist the automatic reflex of measuring out her life in agreeableness. She'd suddenly sober up, make big eyes, and say in a deep voice, all trace of frivolity banished from her face, "Ed White. Ed White. Wh-what do you *rilly, rilly* th-think? Sincerely? Honestly?" Seriousness made her stutter. She suspected me of double-talk, which was unwarranted paranoia on her part, and of unnecessary elaboration, which was entirely justified. I can still picture her face as she screwed it up into a mask of high seriousness. Sometimes she'd beat her arms against her sides as if she were chasing a flock of trespassing geese.

Often, there were friends sitting around watching Anne paint, smoking cigarettes and drinking white wine out of paper cups. She thought of herself as a bold abstractionist and she slashed and dabbed at her canvas with a palette knife or big, wide housepainting brushes. The worst thing in those days was to be considered "weak" or "delicate" or "unresolved." We all subscribed to the belief that only men, only heterosexual men, were cut out to be painters. Only they had the visionary violence, the power to translate feeling into gesture, the nerve necessary to stick by bold, split-second decisions.



Sometimes Anne could be fearfully masculine, driving all the riffraff out of the house as her patience suddenly came to an end, and tearing through her rooms, organizing her mess with military decisiveness. Other days, she'd shampoo her silky hair until it glowed, scrub her face clean, immerse her hands in turpentine until they turned pink, and put on eyeliner and lipstick and two dabs of Guerlain. She doted on me and propped up my ego, which in those days was always sliding like a drunk down into a puddle of self-hatred. I'd read my stories to her, and she'd listen with a look of solemn concentration, though she occasionally paddled a fat little hand through my verbal gossamer. "Ed White," she'd say. "Back up. Whoa! Back *way* up!"

She cooked spaghetti and chicken breasts for me, and boiled broccoli limp, though usually we just ordered pizza. I'd write and she'd paint, and we'd listen to scratchy 78s of Caruso. Once a week, she'd let me borrow her old Beetle to drive over to Detroit to see my shrink, Dr. Moloney. He would ask me if I was dating a two-hundred-and-twenty-pound girl because I felt inadequate to one more obviously desirable. It was true that when I slept with Anne I felt that I was slim and handsome—a prince! My main erotic interest was in how I imagined she was perceiving me.

I never much liked myself when I had sex with men. I could never work up a persona for myself, could never figure out who I was. A pockmarked rapist? A plucked and creamed effeminate monster? My mother? A dirty old man squatting beside a glory hole? None of these images was appealing. With Anne, I liked myself. I was suddenly purpose-built, resplendent. It sounds appallingly vain to say so, but I felt that I was conferring a favor on her. With men, I sometimes believed that I was good company, a loyal friend, a benign influence, but I never thought that I was doing them any favors by sleeping with them. This edgy distrust of my instincts, this eroticized abjection, vanished when I made love to Anne. She approved of me and my writing so enthusiastically that I was afraid of blunting my critical abilities

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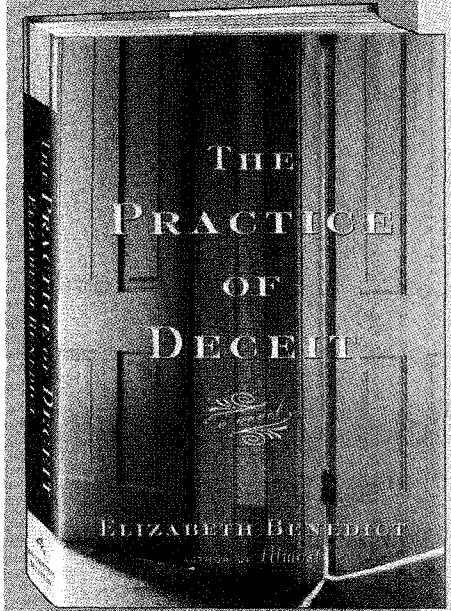
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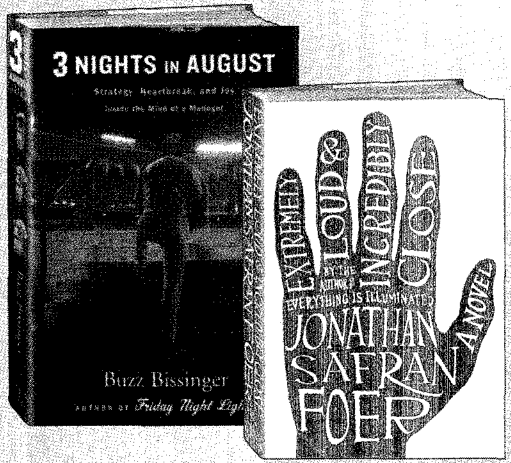
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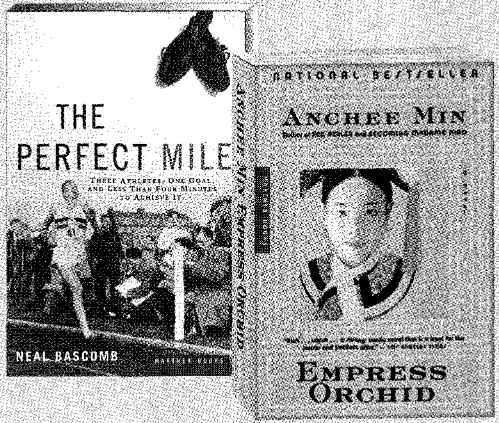
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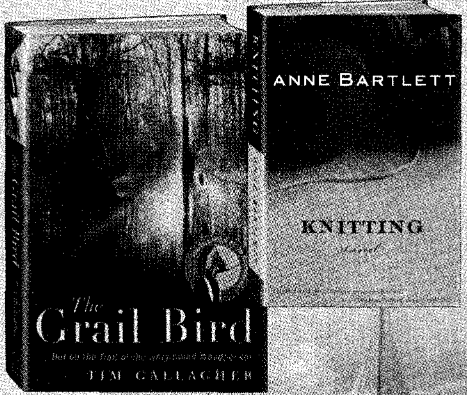
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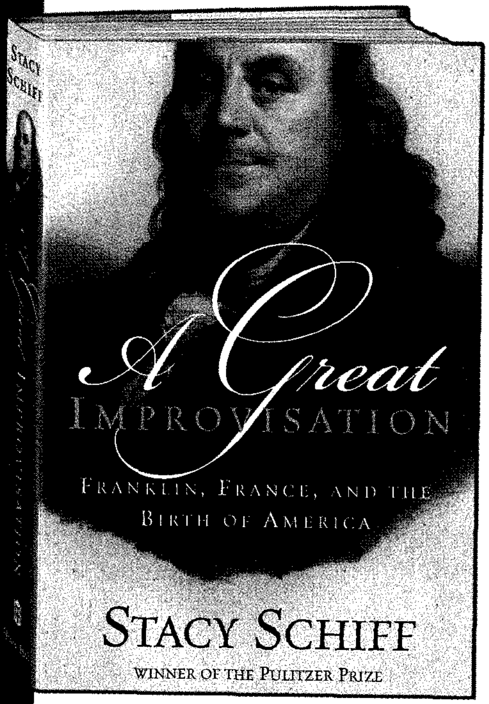

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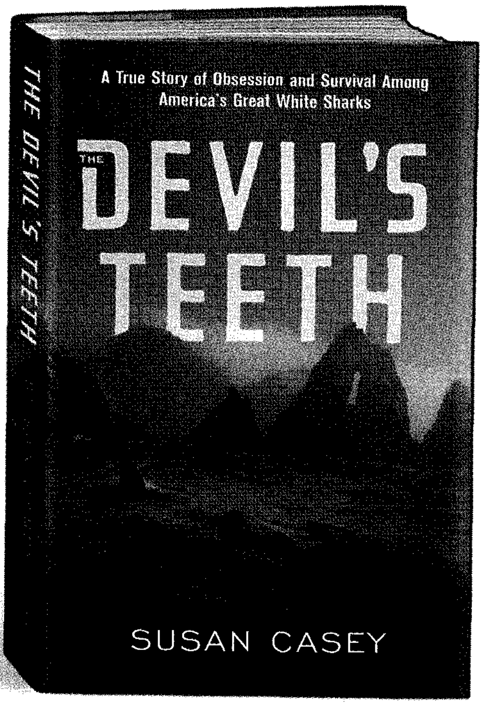

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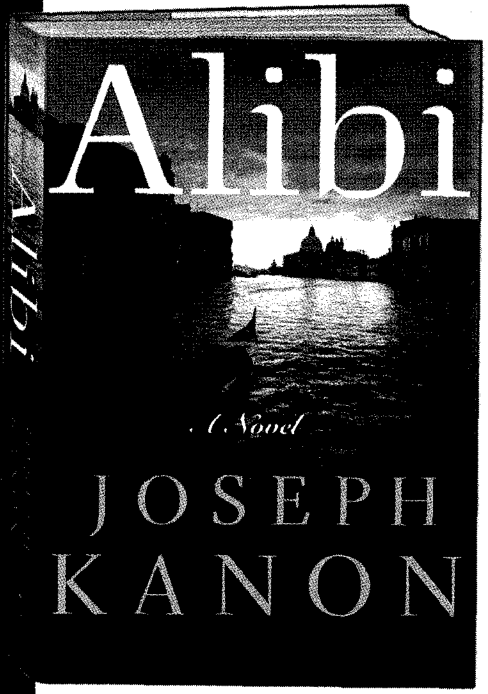

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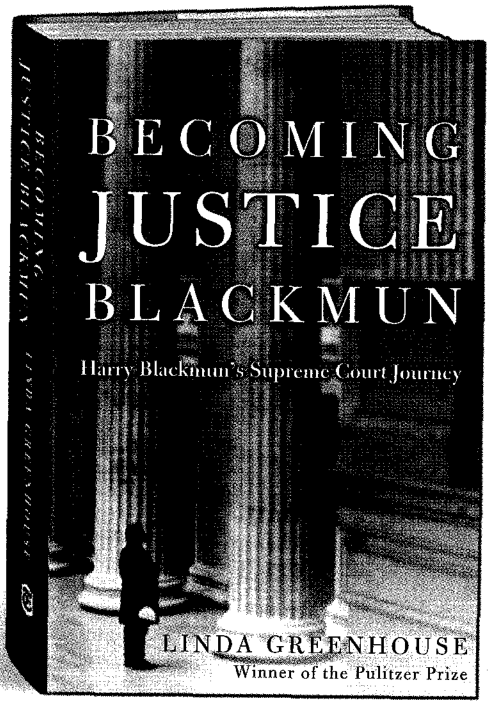

Becoming Justice Blackmun
Becoming Justice Blackmun
Harry Blackmun's Supreme Court Journey
Linda Greenhouse
Winner of the Pulitzer Prize

"Fascinating.... In clear and forceful prose *Becoming Justice Blackmun* tells a judicial Horatio Alger story and a tale of remarkable transformation."

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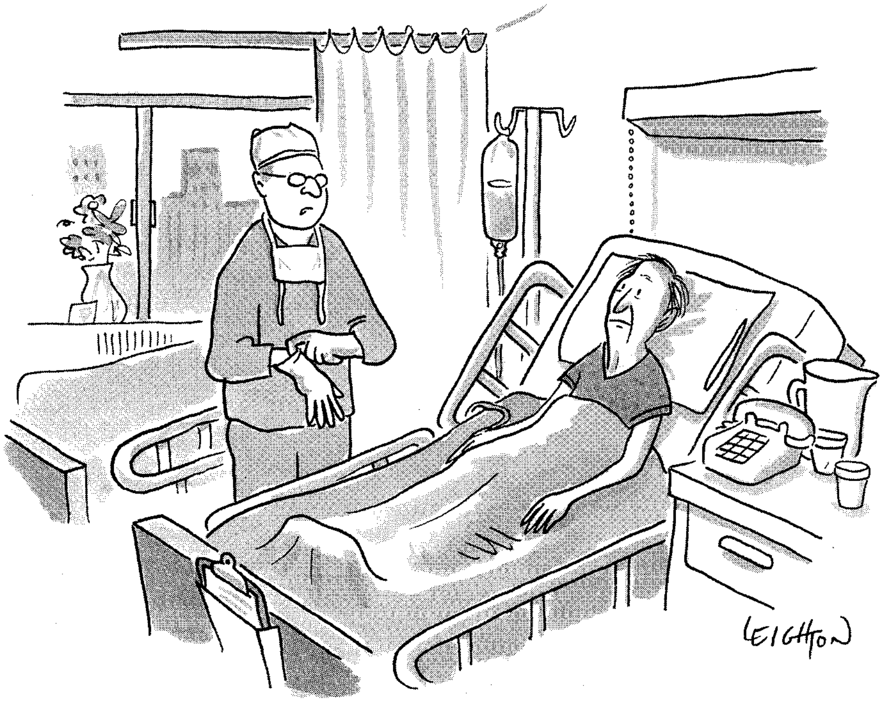
and ending up a fool. But I loved her soft lips, her fragrant breasts, her full but remarkably firm body. Baudelaire writes, "I know the art of evoking happy moments." It's pointless, he says, to look for "your languorous beauty elsewhere than in your dear body and in your sweet heart." I could never have such faith in my own past or present happiness (and surely he, too, is being a bit ironic), but, thanks to Anne, I know what he means.

Perhaps because my mother was drenched in unhappiness and spent sodden hours plotting how to catch a man, any man, I have always feared most females as mantraps. The stability and intimacy that might be gained by acceding to their needs has always been outweighed by my fear of succumbing to their power. Well into my twenties and even my thirties, I was still getting mixed up with unhappy women. For them, I represented a solution. They thought that I would love them, listen to them, learn to fuck them, and that they in turn would plump the pillows, go to the movies I wanted to see, make lemonade according to the long-boiling recipe I preferred, peel the tomatoes as I insisted, and, despite all this deference to me, feel that I was the one being housebroken.

I made all those women cry. One of them threatened suicide. Another threatened to kill me—all because I wasn't man enough to say, "Are you kidding, babe? I'm queer as the May breeze. Get used to it!"

What I loved about Anne and Marilyn—and even Alice, Sally, and Gretchen—was that they weren't unhappy. Marilyn wanted nothing from me but my friendship, and she has it still. She believed in love but dreaded marriage. For her, the proper form of love was a short, romantic affair (followed by an eternal friendship), just as a sonnet is the best form for a love lyric. She wasn't afraid to be alone. In fact, she preferred it. She had her stack of library books, her favorite music, her cozy bed, and delicious snacks always ready. Marilyn kept her lovers enthralled by encouraging them to leave her for someone more suitable. She reminded her Chinese lover to buy a birthday gift for his wife. Her young Indian lover she counselled through a difficult divorce from someone who later became a born-again storefront preacher. She advised her soubrette girlfriend to pursue her opera dreams. And she gathered all her friends around her year after year. Because she and the others I've written about here were the first women I knew who weren't unhappy, who never once made me feel guilty, they showed me the way to friendship with women. ♦



"I'll have someone come in and prep you for the bill."

[redacted]

[redacted]

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DÉBUT FICTION

THE LASER AGE

BY JUSTIN TUSSING

These days, high schools look like pastel-hued laboratories. Sunshine pours down through skylights while vents in the walls pump in ionized air. At the back of the room, you find a newspaper archive or a place where the kids watch through a Plexiglas window as bees secrete royal jelly. There's no sense of curriculum. Everyone is too busy building a résumé. Instead of study halls, the students hold internships. The teachers don't teach—they just sit at the front of the class and laugh at the jokes the kids make. If a kid asks a question, the teacher responds with another question.

In 1972, my peers and I climbed cast-concrete stairs to Annex 11—"annex" was the word that the school district used for the plain white trailers stranded on the blacktop. On a humid September morning, thirty-five of us, heat-anesthetized and yawny, busied ourselves by scratching our names into the desk tops with house keys and penknives and the resilient points of our ballpoint pens. Someone had drawn a set of boobs on the ceiling with the soot from a lighter.

"Mahey, why are you so pale? You look like a troglodyte." Ray Moschi's vocabulary was all science fiction. He filled graph-paper notebooks with sketches of rocket prototypes and babes with swords. A generation later, one of his nephews would shoot up the school just as the buses started to arrive.

I was supposed to say, "Because I was under your mother all summer." Instead I said, "I was making electricity."

"So was I," Moschi said, "with your mother." He stood up and pumped his hips. Then, pretending his dick was a stick shift, he raced around the desks, changing gears. "*Vroom vroom vrooooom vroooooooooom.*"

The door snapped open and a confused-looking girl came in. She wore a brown tweed skirt, a gauzy shawl folded across her shoulders. She carried too many books and the wrong sort of bag. We recognized her as a stranger.

"How'd you find this place?" she asked.

While Moschi continued abusing his gearbox, the girl made the really unexplainable mistake of choosing the wrong desk. Some of us considered correcting her, while the others reached the obvious conclusion. Moschi was still going up and down the aisles making burnout sounds. She asked him his name.

Moschi's face lit up; he put his dick into reverse and sidled up beside her. "Raymond," he said, which was not how any of us thought of him.

At the dawn of a new school year, you were allowed to pretend that you were not yourself. Something might have happened over the summer. You hoped that you had become smarter or more attractive. Your mother bought you a new outfit so that the teachers wouldn't recognize the familiar disappointment you'd been the year before. But we were juniors now. We were running out of time for reinvention. No one really expected our caterpillar selves to emerge as butterflies. We were all second-tier students. That was why we'd been enrolled in the History of Technology instead of Ancient History. HisTech owed its origin to an often observed phenomenon: those same students who struggle with the standard curriculum usually have no problem reboring V-8 engines.

The girl opened one of her notebooks. "Raymond Moschi," she said, making a mark in her book. "Do me a favor, Raymond. Race back to the office, please, and see if you can find us some chalk and an eraser."

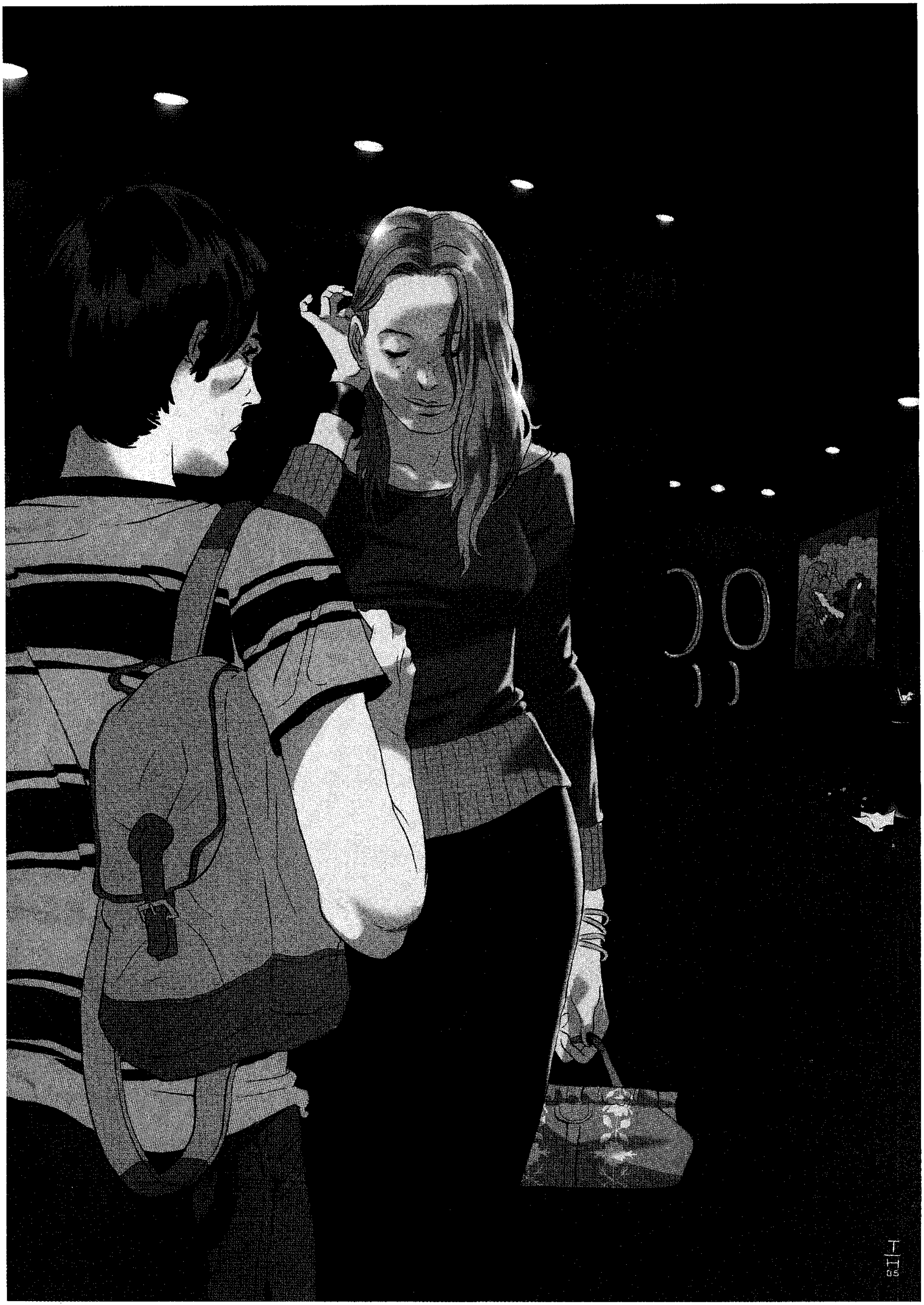
The class burst apart like thunder, our delight reverberating inside the melamine walls.

The teacher made a show of placing her shawl over the chair back, organizing her desk, slotting folders into desk drawers, sharpening pencils, all the while not looking at us looking at her. When Ray returned with the chalk and eraser, she sent him back out for a fan. Then she walked to the front and wrote her name on the chalkboard. I wrote "Alice Lowe" on the palm of my hand. Miss Lowe came over to my desk to see what I'd done. She looked at my hand, then told me to add "notebook," so I'd remember to get one.

I really had been making electricity. Thanks to my father, I'd spent the summer working as a subsystem technician at West State Power. My responsibilities included recording meter readings and hydraulic levels and checking the pressure gauges on back vents. All summer I'd prayed for some genius to figure out how to replace me with a machine. The rest of the time I'd thought about girls. The only woman at the plant drove a front-loader.

Since no girl was just going to show up at my parents' house, I had gone looking for one. Most high-school kids hung out by River Park, which was a terraced parking lot abutting the Ohio River. I staked out the brick plaza downtown; I figured I'd have less competition there. Besides, with its rosebushes and trees trimmed to look like lollipops, the plaza seemed designed for girls. But the town's flood wall shielded the plaza from the pleasant breezes that kicked off the river, breezes that had been the town's birthright. Also, because of the flood wall, you couldn't watch the river's lazy show. The only thing to look at was the vintage Mercury patrol car parked directly across from the police station. The hulking cruiser crouched over the bricks, all gleaming chrome and bottomless black paint.

TOMER HANUKA



Girls failed to materialize. When someone finally took an interest in me, it was a guy. I expected him to walk past like everyone else—the pigeon feeders and the kids on bicycles and the women with their babies in strollers who gave me a wide berth. This guy stopped to stare at me, as if we shared some history and he was only waiting for me to realize it. I didn't feel like meeting his eyes. Instead, I looked at his shoes. They were the weirdest shoes I'd ever seen; they looked like he'd stolen them from a museum. They appeared to be made of straw. Maybe he'd made them himself.

He asked a question. "Are you thinking about turning yourself in?"

"Into what?"

He jabbed his thumb over his shoulder, toward the police station.

"What would I turn myself in for?"

The stranger sat down beside me. He spread his arms across the back of the bench.

I leaned forward, looking left and right, as though I were expecting someone.

"I like to keep an eye on them," offered the stranger.

Tiny clouds, all equidistant from one another, dotted the August sky.

"You like to keep an eye on who?"

"The Man."

"What's wrong with your shoes?" I asked.

He looked down at his feet. "There's nothing wrong with them; they're huaraches."

"Huaraches?"

"Mexican Indians make them. Theirs is the oldest civilization in North America."

The stranger had a chubby face and wore shapeless clothes.

"They look crazy," I said.

"Are you a philosopher?"

"Am I a philosopher?"

"That's what I'm asking you." Pink wrinkles lined his forehead. I saw that what I'd thought of as a tan was actually a layer of dirt.

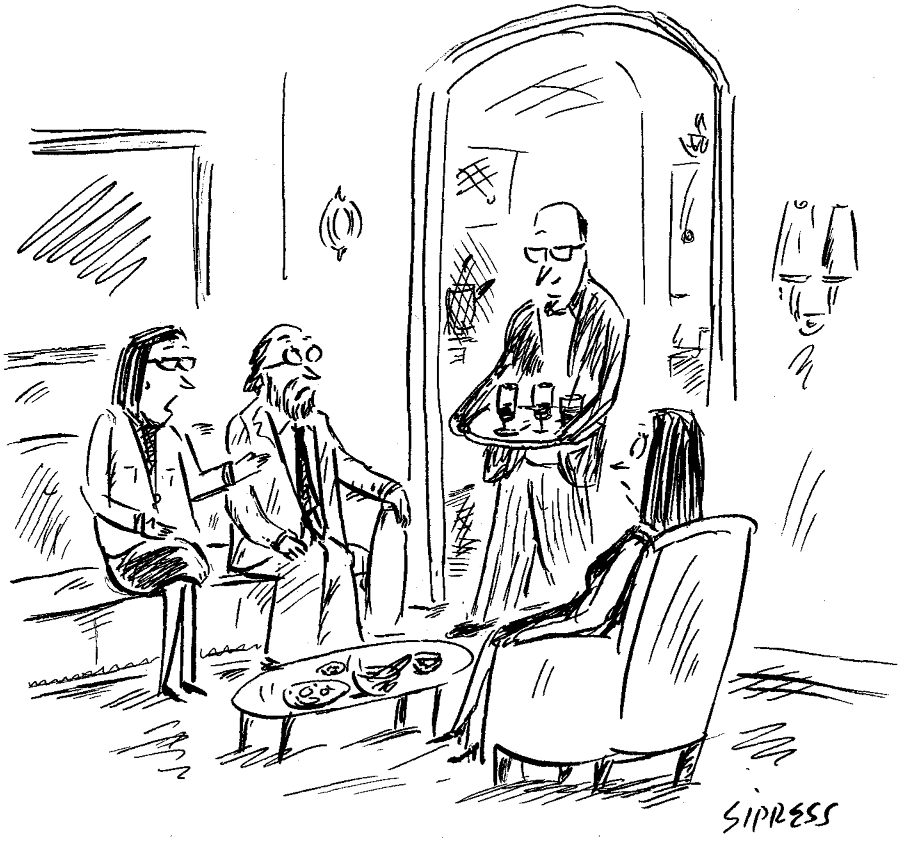
"I'm a student."

"What do you study?"

"I don't study anything. I'm in high school."

"Classic."

"I have to go," I said. I stood up and turned toward the police station; it seemed less likely that he would bother me if I headed that way.



"I worry about every little thing. Barry's more of a generalist."

"Hey." He reached out his hand so we could shake.

Behind squinted, fleshy lids, his eyes were a fragile blue.

He refused to let go of my hand. "Do you know who I am?"

I looked at him hard, but rather than figure out who he was I tried to tell him who I was—namely, not the kind of person he wanted to mess with. I shook my head.

He turned his palm. "Think for a second." His thumb prevented me from retrieving my hand.

"Are you a musician?" He looked like he could own a guitar.

He shook his head. His hair was curly and burned-butter brown.

"I don't know."

As he let go of my hand, he pointed his forefinger at my head and cocked the thumb. "Bang."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Kill the cop in your head."

"O.K.," I said.

With his body draped across the bench, he cast his eyes about. There was something catlike in the way he moved—not an agility, but a sense of ease or entitlement. He might as well have been in his living room.

"You into transcendental meditation?"

I had no idea how to answer. I started to walk away.

"Do you believe in the existence of superintelligent agents of progress?"

"Do you?" I asked.

His hands flew apart, as if I'd asked him to weigh two equal things.

Heading home, it dawned on me that my vigil hadn't been well conceived. Even if a girl had walked by, I probably would have scared her away.

"You know who that was, don't you?" Pawpaw asked.

We were gathered in the kitchen. My mother, Mary, had just finished rolling chicken breasts in coconut flakes. As we watched, she plopped them into a pan of hot oil.

"Your mother has a sophisticated palate," Fran said, walking over to tug on the refrigerator door. Fran was my father. "And you just met the King of the River Rats."

"River rat" was an expression in our town used to denote a person with low prospects. There were river-rat neigh-

You call that a suit?
MEET THE REVIEWER
Shanahan

borhoods and river-rat taverns. If someone annoyed him, Fran might say, "You know that river rat So-and-So." But the King of the River Rats didn't mean a thing to me. I thought he was pulling my leg.

"Shiloh Tanager," Pawpaw said.

The public schools served as a reliquary for stories about Shiloh Tanager. Supposedly, as a baby, he'd been abandoned on the stone steps of the police station. He'd run away from orphanages and foster parents and everybody else. People claimed that he could make a radio from a battery and a twist of wire. He'd been in knife fights and shovel fights. Using block and tackle, he had recovered a Civil War cannon from the river's muddy banks. He had been known to ride railcars, associate with criminals, elude the police. He used to have a shack on the damp floodplain outside town. But it had been a couple of years since anyone had seen him. Some people said he was dead. There was a persistent rumor about some kid who knew some kid who had come across his stinking bones.

"Shiloh was always thin as a bird," Mary said. "Thomas said this fellow was chubby."

"So he's put on a little weight," Fran said. "After all, he's not a kid anymore."

When the coconut turned brown, Mary fished the chicken pieces out of the oil. She set the meat on a wire rack to drain.

"I don't suppose anyone will try to run him out of town again," Pawpaw said. "The last time some fools tried to burn his home down, he snuck up behind them with an axe handle."

"They should have left it to the cops," Fran said. "That place of his is an illegal encampment. He could be arrested for vagrancy."

"I'm not crazy about vagrancy laws," Pawpaw said. "I don't think a person should be held liable for his luck."

"Your grandfather is an extremely moral person," Fran said. "That's his privilege for surviving a war. He's got ideals. Most folks only have principles."

"We can't be sure it's him," Mary said. My mother always found doubt irresistible. She reached up to touch the pins that held her black hair in place.

"Oh, it's him," Fran said, crossing his arms. "I saw him poking around down by the plant the other day. My phone rang and the next time I looked he was gone."

"He was probably collecting parts for his paranoia boxes." Pawpaw raised his hands to indicate a shoebox-size device. "He sells them. Claims they monitor a secret radio frequency our government plans to use in the event of a nuclear catastrophe."

Mary shivered. "They don't work, do they?"

"Of course not," Fran said, reaching over to pat her forearm. "It's just a bunch of wires and a little blinking light. That's people for you. They don't know science from nonsense."

I didn't understand how my parents could know so much about a ghost.

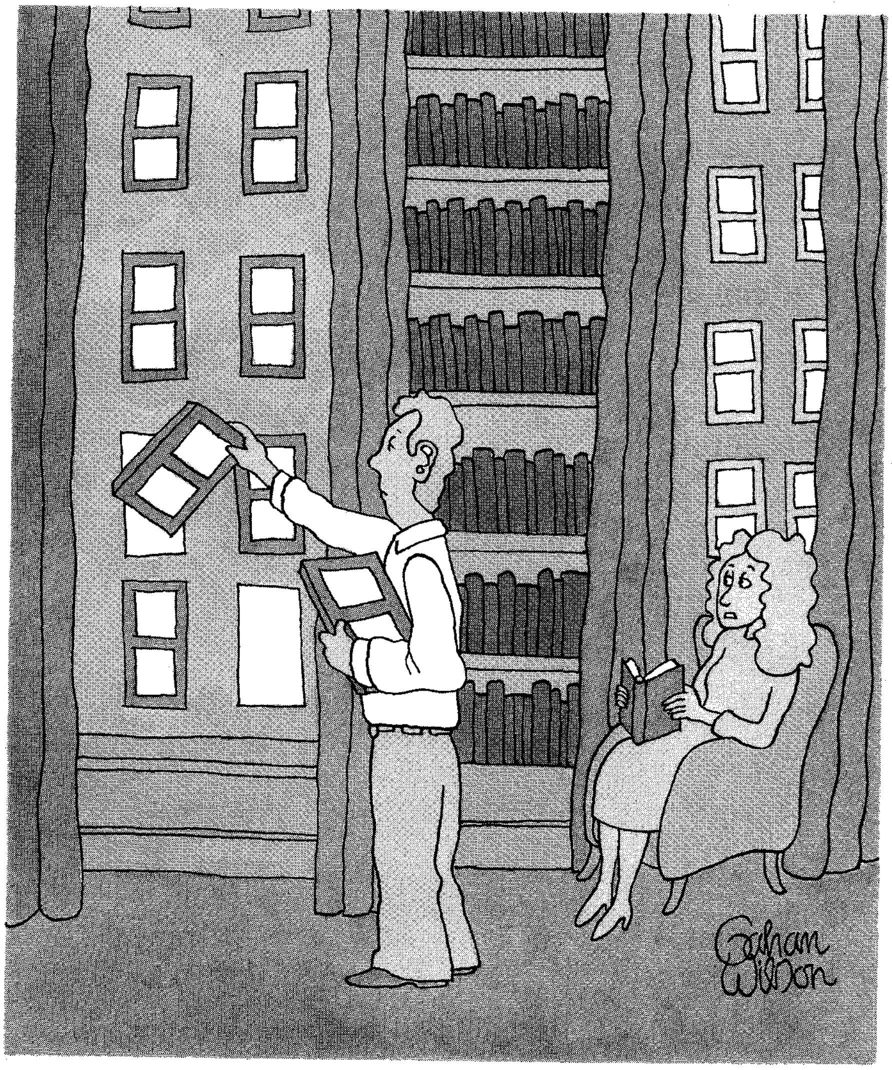
Sometimes Miss Lowe stood before the class, our textbook propped against her hip; other times, she would sit on her desk and set the book beside her—tucking her wheat-gold hair behind her ear whenever it fell across her face. Right off the bat we knew nothing, but she taught us how things put into our brains could be retrieved with some degree of reliability.

Everything we took out of the class was a testament to her will. She wasn't a graceful teacher; her lessons didn't unfold before us. She taught like someone might dig a ditch. She spaded the soil of our ignorance and pitched it out. There was something single-minded about it. She would pause to dab at her forehead with a blue bandanna. I'd never known a woman to perspire so much. We had no idea she'd just earned her teaching certificate.

Miss Lowe asked us to interpret, infer, and extrapolate. She encouraged us to deduce. She reminded us to consider the big picture. She said we should remember that everything inside the book is just a depiction of everything outside the book. What did that mean?

Well, she said, what is the significance of the wall that rings this town? Significance? What does it tell you? That the river sometimes floods. Yes, that the river sometimes floods. Not recently, added Chrissy Ledew. Chrissy liked to sit in the back of the class and read magazines like *Hair Monthly!* and *Bangs*.

I wanted to reinvent myself as a student, not for me, or for Fran and Mary, but because of this woman, with her thick fingers and too-small nose. I was trying to harness my powers of perception. And so I looked at what was close at hand. The covers of each of my textbooks depicted a variation on the same theme—a laser being pulled apart by a prism or rebounding within the



"That's the window, dear. The bookcase is over to your right."

edges of the book. A bigger picture of the world took form in my head. I asked Miss Lowe, "Right now, is this the Laser Age?"

"Is what the Laser Age?"

"This," I said. "Now."

She handed the question over to the class. "Does anyone know the name for the present age?"

Someone said, "The Stadium-Rock-and-Roll Age."

"What about jet planes?" another classmate suggested.

"Maybe the first thing we ought to do," Miss Lowe said, "is consider what stone, bronze, and iron have in common."

"They're metal," came a voice from the back of the room.

All you need to know about that class is that none of us had the confidence to question this statement.

"You make things out of them," I said.

"And what kinds of things?" Miss Lowe prompted.

The class raced to list all the things that could be formed from stone, bronze, or iron.

"And what could you call those things?" Miss Lowe asked.

"Tools," Ray Moschi said.

"Right. So one thing to consider is what we make tools out of today."

"Steel," shouted one of the shop-class savants.

"It's the Nylon Age," Chrissy said.

Someone voiced the group's concern: "Is this a trick question?" We felt very vulnerable to trick questions.

"I don't see how," Miss Lowe said.

And then the bell shot us into the hall.

Later, Ray told Chrissy she could be the queen of the Lumber Age, because she gave him a woody.

I returned to the girlless plaza. I played to my only strength: my patience. When an afternoon sprinkle threatened to turn into rain, I didn't pack it in. The girl in my mind, the girl I was waiting for, had begun to seem more real.

I watched a hunched figure cut through the plaza. He carried, tucked beneath one arm, an object wrapped in a cruddy bedsheet. He walked right past me.

"You're Shiloh Tanager," I said.

The stranger stopped and turned toward me. "In the flesh."

I felt like the detective who triumphantly announces that he's alone with the killer.

"You going to tell me your name?" he asked.

I shook my head.

"What are you doing down here? Someone stand you up?" He switched the parcel to his other arm.

"I just came here to think."

"Any luck?"

There was nothing hostile in his question. He sounded like someone who'd engaged hundreds of strangers in pointless, circling conversations.

"Fran saw you down by the river."

"Who's Fran?"

"Fran's my father."

Shiloh reached up to scratch the crown of his head. Next he scratched the back of his arm. It occurred to me that he might have fleas.

"Is Fran a cop?"

"He works at West State Power."

"You think he'd let me poke around that place? Because, believe me, I could cause some honest trouble in a joint like that."

I said, "It'd be pretty hard to mess things up. Everything is automated."

"Yeah? What do you imagine would happen if I sprinkled iron filings in the right spot?"

"Probably nothing."

"*Whamm-o!* Blackout. The whole state goes dark."

"I don't think iron filings would do that. Even if they did, they'd just call one of the other power stations and someone would flip a switch and that would be it."

"Fran ever let you inside?"

I said, "I used to work there."

Before working as a subsystem technician, I'd considered electricity an essentially noble force. The lesson that job had taught me was that power was inseparable from the diesel stink of the front-loaders racing to relocate mountains of coal, from the buzzing of the transformers, from the turbines' pervasive whirr.

For the protection of the workers, all catwalks and access tunnels were shielded with a pliable steel mesh, which the constant humidity was quickly turning to rust. Orange-red dust settled on everything; if I brushed against a handrail it painted a mark on the chambray jumpsuit the plant had provided me with. The other thing the plant had provided was a pair of rubber gauntlet gloves. The gloves were supposed to prevent us from inadvertently becoming an electrical pathway, but everyone wore them looped over the belts of their jumpsuits.

There were twenty-six critical measurements I needed to record hourly on a clipboard. A dozen non-critical indicators needed to be confirmed at the beginning and end of each shift. The route I followed had been carefully calibrated to eat up exactly one hour, but if I jogged I could take all my measurements in under forty minutes, leaving twenty minutes unaccounted for.

Off the main service passage, down some stairs and through a heavy door, I discovered a sunken room. In the center of this room, three identical motors were lined up, side by side, by a low guardrail. On the other side of the guardrail, the floor fell away. The motors looked like cattle coming to a trough to drink. From each engine, a single pipe descended into the darkness. This was the sump room. Between rounds, I would lie down among the machines, prop my feet on the rail, and close my eyes. The vegetable heat of the place and the dull humming of the machinery lulled me to sleep.

Of course, I started thinking about girls. Living in such close quarters with my parents and Pawpaw, there wasn't much use dwelling on girls, but here I was unobserved. And since I had already made peace with sleeping on the job, it wasn't a big step to other unprofessional behavior. I was supposed to stay in my assigned area and keep my hands off things, unless they were the things that I was supposed to put my hands on. This was for my safety. And yet I found myself leaning against the railing with my eyes closed, until my knees buckled, and for a moment it seemed as if I might pitch forward into that black pit.

"I've got a question for you," Shiloh said. "Does nepotism ensure society or undermine it?"

I tried to look skeptical.

"You know what nepotism is, right? People giving jobs to relatives. That's nepotism."

"It was only a summer job," I said.

"If there's anything worse than a summer job, I don't know what it is. You always stand in the rain?" he asked me.

I shook my head. "We talked before," I said.

"I know. You're the philosopher."

"People thought you were dead."

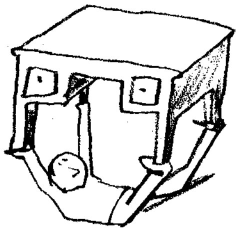
"No, I wasn't dead, I was travelling." Either a raindrop fell on his face or he winked at me. "Abracadabra," he said.

"What?"

He looked up at the sky. "Time for me to disappear."

The congested halls between bells, the stoned kids, the bullies and the scared-o's, the kids in marching band dragging their heavy plastic cases. The cymbal crash of locker doors and the zip spin of combination locks. Everywhere I turned, girls—in faded dungarees and jersey-knit dresses. But they were the wrong girls. We honed our peripheral vision out of necessity. We existed in a state of hyperawareness and we had dull, thoughtless faces.

I stopped when I heard my name. People flowed around me. Miss Lowe stood at the threshold of the teachers' lounge. "Someone looks pensive," she said. I felt the weight of her undivided attention. Her pea-colored sweater, her suède boots, the point of her chin, her pale-pink gums were all forms of consolation.



I took a step toward her. "I was spacing out."

We were close enough that I could smell banana in her shampoo.

She was smiling at me. I looked at my shoes. One of the laces had come undone. I knelt down. Next thing I knew, I was sprawled in the hall.

"Wipeout," someone said.

The other kids stepped over me. Girls in short denim skirts stepped over me. I was invisible to them.

Miss Lowe gave me her hand. She leaned back and pulled me to my feet.

"Thought I'd lost you for a second."

I couldn't make up my mind about the color of her eyes. I hung my head. "I was pushed."

"I'll bet it was an accident."

"I don't believe in accidents."

Already the current was abating; kids slipped through doors.

"No?"

Miss Lowe inspired me to have opinions. I said, "Some people see everything as an accident. They're always asking how this or that happened, and they always come up with the idea of an accident. My mother claims my father is accident-prone, but nothing bad ever happens to him. Meanwhile, her first husband died in Germany when a type of deer they have there jumped off an overpass and through the windshield of their car."

"How awful."

"If he'd swerved, the deer could have killed my mother. Then I wouldn't be here."

"Well," she said, as adults will when confronted with a kid's stupidity. But after a moment she added, "I'd miss you."

Miss Lowe, I thought, who have you mistaken me for? I hope I have a tragic accident or that I do something foolishly brave to confirm what you are thinking. But I also knew there was no way that she could be thinking what I was thinking. She had to have a higher purpose in mind.

"It would be a tragedy," I said. "I suppose."

In class, she seemed so self-possessed, as if she had already weighed and measured everything we might possibly say.

But now a quick sound escaped her, a laugh. I don't know if I'd heard her laugh before. I wanted to hear that happy sound again. If she'd laughed when I'd fallen down, I could have fallen again, but she laughed at what I'd said and I was less sure of my ability to reproduce that.

"Then again," I said, "if I weren't alive my grandfather could stop sleeping on the porch and move into my room. Of course, he wouldn't be my grandfather, either."

One of the science teachers came up behind Miss Lowe to see which brainless fool she was talking to. He stopped to tap on the foggy glass of a terrarium. Then he let his eyes drift down Miss Lowe's back.

"Your grandfather sleeps on the porch?"

"He's an iconoclast. Which means . . . well, I guess you know what it means."

The hall was empty but for the two of us. I had to be somewhere, certainly.

Miss Lowe stepped toward me, pulling the door closed behind her. She reached out and brushed a fingernail across the shoulder of my shirt. "Dust," she said.

I said, "Miss Lowe, do you think that I could meet you sometime at a neutral location?" I had to make it ridiculous to say it at all.

"By neutral, I presume you mean away from school."

"And, obviously, not a bar or a library, though a library would be pretty neutral for me."

She closed her eyes for a second. She seemed to be working out a complicated equation. Maybe she was thinking about aqueducts or Pythagoras. I was afraid she was going to say something like "I'm very disappointed in you." Occasionally this look would come over her in class, as if, despite our chirping questions and mouth breathing, she had found herself alone in the room. Now her lips started to make this shape, this spreading, opening shape. She said, "O.K."

Pawpaw stayed on the screen porch, smoking cigarettes and growing thinner. He slept out there on a cot. He came inside for meals and, sometimes, to use the bathroom. The azalea bush beside the porch door showed signs of ammonia poisoning. He liked to lie in his cot, entertaining his thoughts. Most of those thoughts revolved around mornings he had spent smoking in France during the First World War. He could remember the faces of the people he knew there, their sleeping and tortured and peaceful faces. Mostly he liked to think about the faces they made when they smoked. The cigarettes were free.

The Army had trained Pawpaw to set up and maintain telegraph wires. But when he arrived in France he was put in charge of three dozen messenger pigeons. He wasn't supposed to feed the pigeons too much, but it was hard not to; the pigeons would always eat. In general, he recalled, it had been a slow war.

Pawpaw had been stationed near a small stone bridge. He liked to stand on the bridge, staring into the water, and smoke. He could see the mossy stones in the streambed.

I asked him once if he ever wanted to go back to that bridge.

He cocked his head. "Why would I want to do that?" From his brush-cut hair to his skinny legs, there was nothing extraneous about him. Even his speech was pointed and clipped. Pawpaw's only vanity was his hair, which he washed with Ivory soap and combed with coal tar.

"You could see everything again."

"And what do you think that would accomplish?"

"It might help you remember things."

"I remember things fine. I remember the cigarettes. I remember the egg pies." There was a farm just down the road, and every morning the farmer's wife brought him and his buddy an egg pie.

"I just thought it might be cool if you got a chance to see those things again."

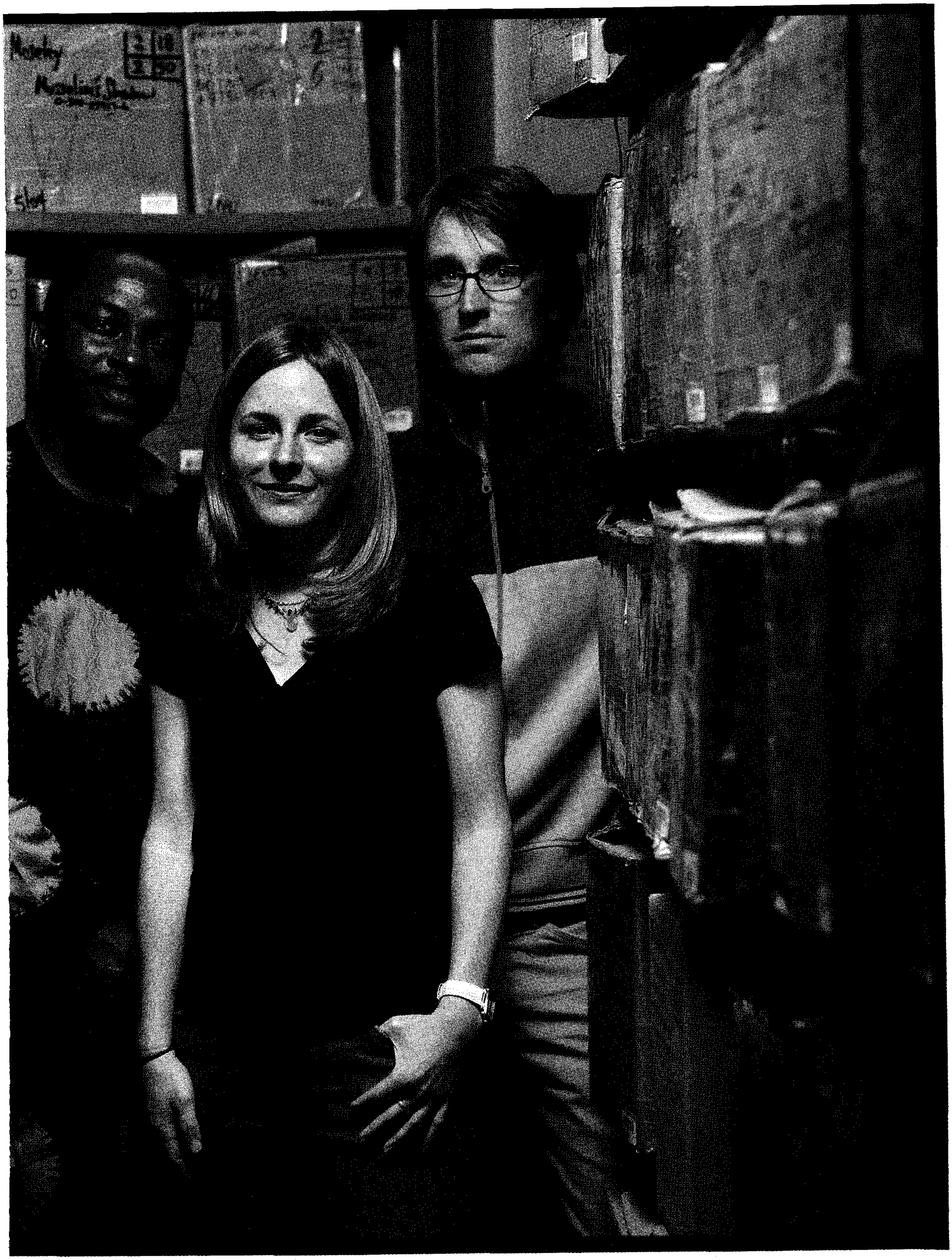
This was on one of those misty days when the moisture fills the screens so that every tiny opening offers a portrait of the outside world, perfect but upside down.

"The whole point of that war was to get your Pawpaw off that bridge."

"What do you mean?"

"Forget those supposed histories you find in books. I mean exactly what I said. The whole purpose of the Great War was to get me off that bridge."

Début authors: Uwem Akpan, thirty-four;



Karen Russell, twenty-three; and Justin Tussing, thirty-four, at the Strand Book Store, in New York. Photograph by Steve Pyke.

"That's the craziest thing you've ever said."

"The crazy thing is that ten million people died. Yet as soon as they sent home all of us guys who'd been standing on bridges, the war was over. Why couldn't they have done that first?"

I didn't see Miss Lowe for two weeks over Christmas break. She'd told the class that she was visiting her sister outside Chattanooga. In Miss Lowe's absence, I did stupid things like sniffing soap at the pharmacy, trying to determine the brand she used. Before the break, everyone had given her presents—chocolate apples, winter gloves, a bootjack. I put a card on her desk that read, "Miss Lowe, You will be receiving a 1-year subscription to *Popular Mechanics* magazine, courtesy of the Mahey family. Merry Christmas!" Mary had bought subscriptions for all my teachers, at a discount, from someone at our church.

Except for an usher going over the carpet with an automatic broom, the movie theatre's lobby was empty. It had a high tin ceiling. Off to the side, a snack bar was crammed into a little alcove. It wasn't a diner, exactly, but there was a counter and a few booths. The walls were covered with those weird mirrors that are crazed with veins of gold paint.

Miss Lowe came in wearing a boatneck sweater and a skirt like a Persian rug. The fabrics rubbing together generated so much static that, as she made her way to my booth, her hair levitated about her face. This, I imagined, was the kind of effect that would prevent a woman from wearing something a second time. I concluded she'd dressed just for me.

"You're here!" she said.

Outside of class her voice had a great capacity for warmth.

"In the flesh," I said.

The woman behind the counter circled words in a pulpy pamphlet and paid us no mind.

The second thing Miss Lowe said was "I'm glad we did this." I'd planned to say something similar when we went our separate ways. I had no idea what I would say now.

"This place is great," she said, pulling her hair back from her face. From beneath the table, Miss Lowe's bare feet appeared. They found a spot beside me on the seat. Just as suddenly they darted away.

"Sorry," she said. "My manners are the pits."

I said, "I don't even have manners."

It's hard to remember if she acted the way I like people to act, or if what I like in people is to be reminded of Alice Lowe.

She reached across the table and poked my arm. "You've got green eyes," she said.

Nothing she could have said would have made me any happier.

BAD FOR YOU
A RESTAURANT
MANKOFF

"Well," Miss Lowe said, "aren't we a couple of cheap dates."

The last word just hung in the air.

"Can I see your necklace?" I asked her.

She pinched the chain and lifted it out of her sweater. It was a delicate cross with silver filigree.

"That's cool," I said.

"Do you wear a cross?"

I felt disappointed in myself; I didn't.

"Don't you love the idea of miracles?" Miss Lowe said.

"Any welcome event is a miracle, according to Pawpaw."

I had to explain to her that Pawpaw was my mother's father.

"So you believe in miracles, but not accidents?"

That was my position.

Miss Lowe's feet reappeared on the cushion beside me—by Pawpaw's definition, a miracle.

"This was your idea," she reminded me. "Ask me questions."

Her favorite color: yellow. Her favorite sport: waterskiing. The three freckles on her neck formed a line that pointed to her collarbone. On one arm she wore about a hundred silver hoops, while wrapped around the other wrist was a braided leather band. When she moved her arm across the table, the silver hoops turned like wheels. By noticing the smallest details, I hoped to make myself worthy of her. The only jewelry I owned was an enamel pin from the Mexico City Olympics.

"Can I ask you a question?" Miss Lowe said.

I had allowed myself to slouch in my seat. When I tried to push myself up, my hand came down on Miss Lowe's ankle. I was amazed that my hand had achieved something I couldn't will.

I told her she could ask me anything.

"Thomas," she said, "what do you think about when you look at me?"

An honest answer was unthinkable. I said, "I'm probably just daydreaming."

"And what are you daydreaming about?"

I don't think she expected me to answer. I got the sense she was looking for a chance to put me on my heels.

"I don't think I should say."

"I'm the worst teacher," she said.

I smiled at her.

"I really am."

The woman behind the counter left her station to prop open the theatre's red doors. Miss Lowe turned her face toward the mirrored wall, as a recorded orchestra played a martial tune and couples emerged, blinking, into the bright lobby. I met her reflected gaze. We stayed like that for several uncomfortable moments.

I said, "You're the smartest person I know."

She turned to look at me head on. "Thomas, do you have a girlfriend?"

"Currently I have exactly zero girlfriends." I felt like I was leaking information. The longer we sat there, the greater the odds that I would be left without secrets or hope.

Back behind the counter, the woman poured popping corn into a hopper.

"I don't think I'm going to college," I said, though I hadn't given the matter any thought before.

The woman I'd been sitting with disappeared and a more familiar person took her place. "What do you think you're going to do?" she asked, and then, almost as an afterthought, she added, "You know you would probably be able to get in somewhere."

I said, "I think I'd prefer to learn things in a more realistic environment."

"Sure," she said, but something in her tone suggested that she didn't quite agree with me.

"Or maybe I'll travel."

Miss Lowe drew shapes on the Formica tabletop with her fingertip. "Do you ever get lonely, Thomas?"

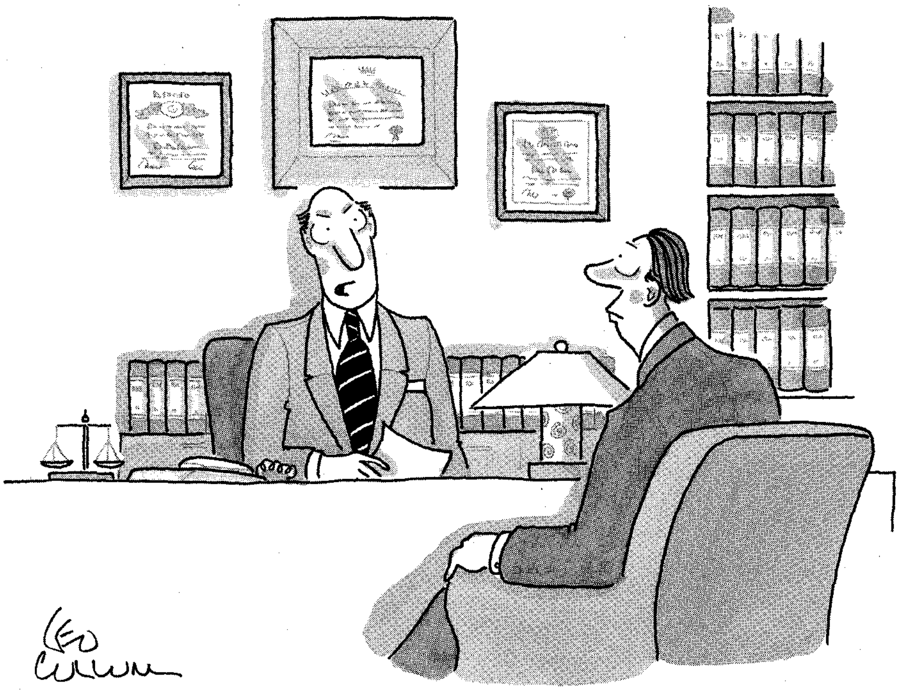
It was obvious that she didn't know the first thing about me. My bedroom and my parents' room shared a wall—only the dehumidifier in Mary's closet disguised our night sounds. Pawpaw's military background meant that he didn't think twice about visiting me in the bathroom. How, in that house, could a person feel lonely? "Why?" I asked. "Do you?"

She drove a Plymouth Valiant, a schoolteacher's car, modest and neat and six or seven years old, with full-length chrome molding and Blue Dot whitewall tires. The paint, a sort of blooming algae.

I walked to the passenger door.

She slotted the key in the lock. "You knew this was my car."

"You were walking toward it," I said.



"And today if the prosecutor says 'Liar, liar, pants on fire,' do not turn around to check."

• •

"No," she said, opening the door. "You were in front of me."

Inside her car, the headliner cloth was coming unglued from the ceiling—it jiggled like the walls of a tent.

It was the emptiness of her car that bothered me. Then I noticed, dangling from the turn-signal indicator, a red ribbon, like you might win at a fair.

"What's that?" I asked.

She turned the ribbon in her hand. "I don't know."

She drove through the gap in the flood wall at North Main. At the lowest tier of River Park, we stopped and listened as the water slapped against the mud banks. I took casual, sidelong glances at her face. She had a high, blank forehead. I was singularly aware of her body, the radiating waves of heat that registered on my arms and neck. It was terrifying.

After it was dark, she said, "Wouldn't you like to float down that river?"

It was as though she had pulled the idea from someplace deep inside of me. But I couldn't find the strength to speak to her.

A car crept by with just its parking lights on. They raked us with a spotlight before driving on.

"Creeps," Miss Lowe said. She cranked her window down.

"That was the police," I said.

Miss Lowe turned in her seat. "You're right."

"I should probably get home," I said.

"Right," Miss Lowe said. "I'd better get you home."

The town seemed full of strangers all of a sudden. Filing past me in the plaza, they teased me with fragments of sentences. I heard "go" and "leave." Everywhere I looked I found their unfamiliar faces. Some wore dark suits, like they'd just returned from a funeral, and some had on pants that looked like they were made out of sofa upholstery. I heard "interstate" and "majestic." I tried to find meaning in their structureless talk. They might have been messengers from the greater world, or they might have been the message. I suppose they could have been there all along.

From the plaza, it was only a ten-minute walk to the Ohio River. I walked along the river's sun-cracked banks. Wavelets licked at the shore, at the junk that had managed to climb out of the water. Pieces of nylon rope harnessed rafts of rotting sawgrass. Everywhere you saw those white peas, like the eyes of poached fish, broken Styrofoam from beer coolers and those brittle life-preserver rings they sold in drugstores. The senseless meanderings of raccoons and birds were preserved in the mud like an ancient language. The water stank, sometimes of sewage, sometimes of kerosene. The same stuff ran through the pipes in my parents' house. The greatest surprise in my life was coming across odorless water.

When I thought I'd gone far enough along the relatively clear and open riverbank, I stumbled my way through brambles and briar, knowing full well that I'd likely scare up yellow jackets and mud daubers and possibly cottonmouths. I was unsticking myself from the puckerbrush when I spotted the dark little house. The walls were swollen particleboard. The roof was a sheet of tin held in place with round stones. Tufts of yellow insulation shivered as they registered a breeze. A figure walked out, shirtless and wearing canvas pants. He looked unsteady, as if he'd just woken from a dream. His shoulders were stacked with muscle, but he was soft around the middle. He walked about twenty feet from the house, stopped, tilted his head back, and pissed in the grass.

I turned around and started to pick my way back toward the river.

"Hey," he called out to me.

If I'd run, he couldn't have done a thing about it.

"You found me," Shiloh said.

"I wasn't looking for you."

"Bullshit." It looked like someone had slapped his chest with a wide brush of black paint.

"You really live in there?" I asked, pointing at his house. The front door had scraped clear a half-moon of dark earth. The place was the losing turn in a game of pick-up-sticks.

"You want a tour?"

I shook my head.

"Suit yourself."

He made a visor with his hand and scanned the panorama.

"You come all the way out here by yourself?"

I said, "It's a free world."

"Oh, man," he said. "I wish you hadn't told me. I wanted to be surprised when I found out."

AN ELEGY FOR MY MOTHER IN WHICH SHE SCARCELY APPEARS

I knew we had to grieve for the animals
a long time ago: weep for them, pity them.
I knew it was our strange human duty
to write their elegies after we arranged their demise.
I was young then and able for the paradox.
I am older now and ready with the question:
What happened to them all? I mean to those
old dumb implements which have
no eyes to plead with us like theirs
no claim to make on us like theirs? I mean—

there was a singing kettle. I want to know
why no one tagged its neck or ringed the tin
base of its extinct design or crouched to hear
its rising shriek in winter or wrote it down with
the birds in their blue sleeves of air
torn away with the trees that sheltered them.

And there were brass fire dogs which lay out
all evening on the grate and in the heat
thrown at them by the last of the peat fire
but no one noted down their history or put them

There wasn't much out there to distract us from each other.

"Want to see something?"

I didn't give him an answer.

He ducked back inside his place. In the next moment he came out waving a long brass rod. An extension cord trailed from his other hand. He stabbed the rod into the ground, twisting it back and forth to force it deeper. A power cord extended from the top of the rod. He asked me to back up, then he plugged it in. Nothing happened.

"What's it supposed to do?"

"Give it a second."

I expected sparks to start leaping off the rod, or maybe it would melt.

Then, just a few inches from where the rod stuck into the earth, a worm came writhing to the surface. Then another and another.

"Cool, huh?" He seemed too old for the expression. Like everything else in his life, I suppose he'd scavenged it from someone else.

He unplugged the device. The worms retreated into the earth. "It makes a great Father's Day gift."

My eyes traced the extension cord back inside his place. "How'd you get electricity out here?" I knew he was stealing it. It wouldn't be too difficult to tap into a street light or a telephone pole, but he'd still need half a mile of extension cords. It was hard to believe.

"I worked out a deal with someone who had access to spools of wire. You are aware there's another economy, a gray market that exists in response to the insidious capitalist markup?"

"So you basically stole it."

"I haven't stolen anything. They were compensated."

"What did you give them?"

"It just so happens I was able to pay in legal tender, which I had accumulated in exchange for other goods and services."

"Your paranoia boxes."

"Disaster scanners and worm prods, this and that." He coiled up the extension cord and pried the metal rod from the ground.

"Where did you go when you left?"

"If you can find it on a map, chances are I've been there."

"It doesn't make any sense."

"You're telling me."

"I mean that you came back here."

The two of us looked at his bankrupt little house.

"The first thing a bird sees it figures

in the old packs under slate-blue moonlight.
There was a wooden clotheshorse, absolutely steady,
without sinews, with no mane and no meadows
to canter in; carrying, instead of
landlords or Irish monks, rinsed tea cloths
but still, I would have thought, worth adding to
the catalogue of what we need, what we always need

as is my mother, on this Dublin evening of
fog crystals and frost as she reaches out to test
one corner of a cloth for dryness as the prewar
Irish twilight closes in and down on the room
and the curtains are drawn and here am I,
not even born and already a conservationist,
with nothing to assist me but the last
and most fabulous of beasts—language, language—
which knows, as I do, that it's too late
to record the loss of these things but does so anyway,
and anxiously, in case it shares their fate.

—*Eavan Boland*

is its mother. Doesn't matter if it's a cat or a bicycle. That's how I feel about the river. I smell that water and I just want to curl up and go to sleep. Tell me it's different for you."

I hadn't made my way down there in order to tell him about myself. Besides, I'd never been away from the river.

"I have to be somewhere, right?" Shiloh said. "The opposite of somewhere is nowhere and I'm not interested in being there."

"You mean dead?"

"What a strange bird you are, son of Fran."

I told him my first name.

"Thomas," he said, "I'm here to rebuild my heart."

I looked around us, at the silent river, the empty sky. What was wrong with me that drove people to talk like that?

"I should get going."

"You don't have to ask my permission. You can go whenever you want. My foremost belief is that a person has the right to do as he or she feels."

"I wasn't asking your permission."

"And if you'd listened you'd know I can't grant it to you anyway."

"I'm not the strange bird. You're the strange bird."

Shiloh put his hands over his chest. He staggered backward. "You got me," he said. "I'm wounded."

I was angry all of a sudden, for walking all the way out there, for his stupid answers, for this feeling inside my chest like an unreachable itch.

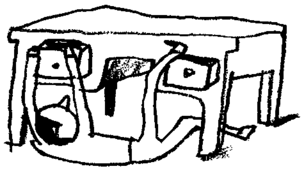
"So what is it?" Shiloh asked.

"What is what?" I shouted back.

"The thing that's driving you crazy."

In the month after Miss Lowe and I met in town, nothing passed between us but the occasional sly look. Her comments on my papers never revealed a hidden thought. We'd walked up to the edge of something and flinched.

Then warm rains melted Pennsylvania snowpack, causing the Ohio to swell beyond its banks. It didn't matter that overhead we had clear skies. Public Works employees scrambled about River Park, collecting anything that might wash away—oil-drum ashcans, the sign reminding people to set their parking brakes on the boat ramp, the bases on the baseball field. Every Sunday, when the weather was fine, Baptist congregations gathered in the park, in white nightshirts and cassocks and dresses and trousers, to wade into that turbid murk. Young families backed their station wagons to the water's edge to eat picnics on the ledges of their tailgates. Now the sewer commission dogged down the overflow pipes, to prevent the rising river from following those passageways into town. Finally, the breaks in the flood wall, at North Main, Clairmont, and River Way, were sealed off with heavy steel plates. For the first time, the town was shut off from the river.



People returned to the downtown. They reclaimed the plaza for their shrieking kids and their yappy dogs. They gathered by the glass wall of City Hall's rotunda to look out over the flooded land. From that vantage point, Shiloh's home, way in the distance, looked like the pilothouse of a swamped ship. I hoped that he was still there.

I felt something building in my heart. In the middle of the night, I sneaked out my bedroom window and across town to a squat, Federal-style building. I stood there, without a clue how to proceed, studying the iron stars that wept rust down the side of the brickwork. A window shuddered in its casement. Miss Lowe leaned her head out, one hand on the sill, the other holding back her hair. After a moment, she disappeared inside.

I heard a door open and then she came from around the side of the building. She wore cutoff jeans, a T-shirt, and rubber flip-flops.

"We have to be like a couple of mice," she said, taking my hand.

The hallway was too narrow for us to walk side by side. I followed the long muscles of her legs as they climbed the linoleum-covered stairs. On the third floor, she pushed through a door into a cramped room filled with milk-colored light.

"Well," she said, "take a look around."

The furniture, a sofa and an armchair, was cloaked with white sheets. On one wall, a free calendar from the hardware store hung by a thumbtack. A banker's gooseneck lamp rested on a card table piled high with books. A blocky school phonograph sat beneath it on the floor.

I said, "This is a nice place, Miss Lowe."

She wagged her finger in front of me. I understood.

"Alice," I said.

I wound up in the bathroom; it was like a bathroom on a train, the sink as small as a salad bowl.

"Are you looking for the bedroom?"

A twin bed was tucked into a corner, rainbow-printed sheets peeking out beside two pillows. Her bedside table supported a red-shaded lamp and a windup alarm clock.

We sat on the edge of the bed with our knees touching. Alice showed me a picture of her sister with some guy—the two of them were waving like they were taking off to live on the sun.

"O.K.," Alice said. "We need to have a conversation."

Yes, a conversation.

"First of all, are you here on your own accord?"

"Yes," I said, "I guess."

She said, "I'm not on the pill."

I was unprepared.

We went back into her kitchen to kiss. When things got too intense, she boiled water and introduced me to herbal tea. I was ready to swallow any bitter thing. In the drying rack beside the sink I counted a single sponge, a single spoon, a single plate, a juice glass.

"Who's that ugly cuss?" Pawpaw asked, catching me as I checked my reflection in the bathroom mirror.

"Do I need to shave?"

He pinched my jaw in his bony fingers. He squinted at my bare cheeks. "A kitty cat could lick those off."

"They're beginning to come in."

He stood behind me so our heads were side by side in the mirror. "You know who used to look at himself all the time?"

"Who?"

"Robbie O'Dell."

My mother's first husband. All I knew about him, other than the accident, was that he'd worked as a commercial pilot. ("Your mother's friend flew planes" was how Fran put it.) They'd married straight out of high school. In a single year, Mary and O'Dell had lived in Texas, Montreal, and West Berlin. Then the accident happened and, as soon as she was released from the hospital, Mary moved back home. She married Fran on a rainy spring day, in a rawwood gazebo in her parents' back yard. At his office, Fran kept a favorite picture: my mother, in her wedding dress, leaning against him. Because the rain-soaked ground kept wrenching her heels off, she is barefoot. Fran faces the camera, but his eyes aim up at the rain. Mary smiles with her lips pulled back from her teeth, like she's about to bite into something.

I couldn't see that picture without thinking she'd been happy before. I said, "No one ever told me that."

"You never met someone so in love with his own face."

I was in the kitchen, watching Mary bone a chicken. She slid the blade under the skin, making quick, jabbing cuts. When the phone rang, Mary indicated it with the point of the greasy knife.

The person on the other end of the line gave me simple instructions.

"Well?" Mary said, after I returned the handset to its cradle.

"I have to go out," I said. "That was a girl."

Mary dropped the knife in the sink. "It's a school night, you know." She caught me by the shoulder and poked at my bangs with her fingernails. "Comb your hair first."

I tried to appease her.

"Now you're making it worse."

Pawpaw came in from the porch, a cigarette pinched dead in his fingers.

"Ask your grandson what he's up to."

"I only came in to run interference for him." He maneuvered himself between me and Mary. "Scoot, kiddo."

It dawned on me, as I cut across the yard, that I was about to be dumped. Nothing else could demand such immediacy. I'd visited Alice's apartment six times. Twice she had cooked me dinner. One time, when she was sick, we sat together on her little sofa. But she'd found the nerve and now it was up to me to put my head on the chopping block. There was some honor to be mined by being complicit. I jogged off, down the center of the street. I didn't get more than a few blocks before I was winded, but I didn't let it slow my pace.

Her schoolteacher car bore down on me. The jouncing suspension sent the headlights up and down. She never slowed. At the last moment, I had to dive for the curb.

There was a shrieking sound as she locked up the brakes. The car slid to a stop. She reached across to let me into the passenger seat.

I could barely breathe from running.

"I can't believe this night," she said. She'd been crying.

She wore a short corduroy skirt. I had seen her wear it before with fuzzy tights, but now her legs were bare. And her naked legs and the fact that she'd been crying were like two voices competing for my attention.

She ran a stop sign and then another.

I asked her to let me drive.

It was very nice to steer Alice's car. The wheel was warm where her hands had been. And I wanted to stop, to look at her, but I didn't think she would tolerate such scrutiny. In order to make the town as big as it could be, I followed the roads that paralleled the flood wall. Some of the seams in the cement seeped black water. The diesel engines powering the bilge pumps made a wall of sound.

I wracked my mind for a place better than this. I could drive her to her sister's in Chattanooga. Her sister lived with a dentist, Alice had told the class. They had a huge stereo. Their refrigerator housed nothing but leftovers from their favorite restaurants. Right outside their back door was an artificial lake that had been optimized for waterskiing. Taking Alice there might demonstrate my selfless heart. But I didn't want to stand beside things I couldn't afford. I didn't want to be measured against something like that.

Alice lifted my right hand from the steering wheel and pressed it against her cheek. "Do I feel hot to you?"

I held my hand against her forehead, then touched my own forehead. Then I smelled my hand. "I can't tell."

"I took some aspirin earlier. I hoped it would make me tired."

I concentrated on driving in a soothing way.

"I love that car," Alice said, as we drove past the police station. "It's like a big black cat."

She left a space for me to speak. I studied the blank expanse of the flood wall, searching for the thing to say.

Alice leaned the side of her face

against the window. And it seemed as if something stood between us, too, something as transparent and unyielding.

I wanted to forgive her for what she was about to do. I felt that big.

She said, "Stop the car."

The headlights reflected off a shallow puddle that hugged the base of the wall. Alice got out. She stuck her whole fist in her mouth, like a girl at a party trying to get attention.

Poking my head through her open door, I asked if she was O.K.

She nodded and pushed her hand deeper into her mouth. Her eyes were bright. She coughed and coughed. Finally something came up.

I got out of the car and stood beside her.

There was a shiny mess on the pavement—saliva, bile, and small pieces of chalk.

"Is that all aspirin?"

She stuck her hand back in her mouth. She spit up some more. She wiped her eyes with her sleeve. Her hand looked boiled.

We could hear the river sliding past on the other side of the flood wall. We were underneath the water, and dry.

Alice turned to look at me. "I received an upsetting phone call." Tendrils of hair glued themselves to the corner of her mouth.

Someone had died, I thought. That was it. Someone she loved, maybe. She started shaking. I rubbed a palm against her spine.

"At some point he's going to make up his mind to come down here." Alice had left her door ajar and the light inside the car tried to coax us back.

"An old boyfriend?" I asked.

"My ex-husband."

I don't remember saying anything, but Alice answered me nevertheless.

"Yes," she said.

It was an awful revelation, but at least she hadn't dumped me. And then I realized she might dump me still.

"He threatened me."

"How did he threaten you?" My voice was as empty as a parrot's.

"He occupies the moral high ground." She walked away from the car. If we walked far enough, we'd end up back where we started—the flood wall would see to that.

"Did you cheat on him?" I asked.

"He would have preferred that. No, I decided I'd had enough. We'd been together three years and I couldn't bear the idea of another day with him. While he was off at work, I loaded all my things in my car. I taped a note to the bathroom mirror. But when I went outside, he was there."

"You mean he was waiting for you?"

"He said he'd seen something in my eyes."

I was jealous of anyone who knew her well enough to interpret her veiled intentions.

"He demanded an explanation. I had my keys in my hand, Thomas. I couldn't wait to leave. He snatched the keys and crammed them in his mouth. I guess he tried to swallow them. They got caught. He started coughing. I went inside and called an ambulance. I waited by the front door. A pair of police cars rolled up. By then he was curled up in the yard. The officers made sure he was breathing. They were ready to stab his neck with their tracheotomy kits. Then an ambulance arrived and the paramedics loaded him in back."

I said, "I'm sorry."

"I did everything I could to make it work, Thomas. But I saved myself. I can be cruel when I need to be now; that's what I learned from him. I took the spare set of keys and I left."

All along, in her empty apartment and her empty car, he had been the thing that was missing.

"Do you think he might show up?"

"I told him not to."

It was clear to me that that would not be sufficient. Given the choice between not seeing her and seeing her displeasure, there was no choice. I didn't know much about love, but I knew this.

Alice said, "I want to go somewhere he can't find me." She turned the pockets of her skirt inside out.

"What are you looking for?" I asked.

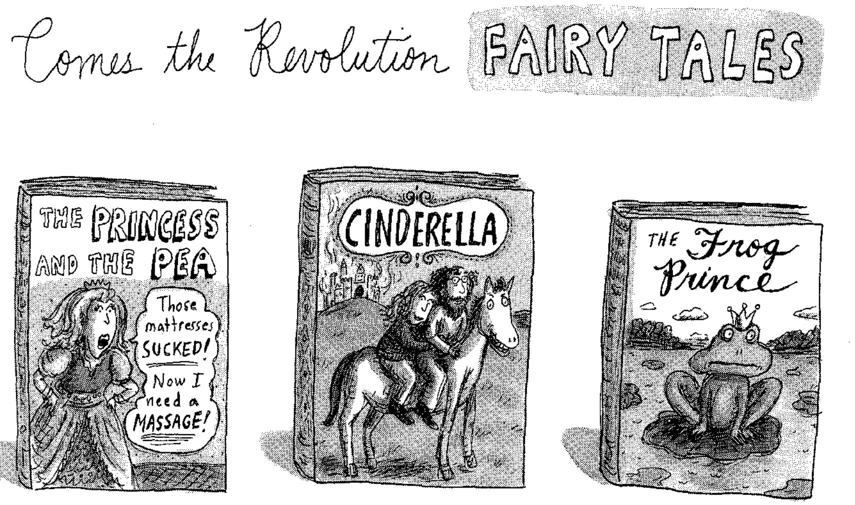
She didn't seem to hear me.

After tucking her pockets back in, she reached over and took my hand. "Gum," she said.

"I'd protect you from him," I said.

"Maybe you would."

I thought, I'll go with you, with nothing but the clothes on my back. Later you may run from me. If someone else is there to save you, it will fall on you to give that person some accounting of who I was. That will be your obligation. And though it's hardly possible, I would like to be that next person, too. I would like to save you over and over again. That's the type of life I wanted to lead when I was seventeen. We continued walking. Our shoulders bumped together. I lifted her hand and kissed it. "Do that again," she said. I kissed her hand again. It was a long walk back to the car. ♦


Comes the Revolution FAIRY TALES
THE PRINCESS AND THE PEA
Those mattresses SUCKED! Now I need a MASSAGE!
CINDERELLA
THE Frog Prince

When peasants find out who the princess is by using the old mattress-pea trick, they kill her.

Cinderella's stepmother, her stepsisters, and Prince Charming are all killed in an uprising as Cinderella runs off with Henri, an idealistic student.

The Frog Prince realizes that he's just lucky to be alive.

R. Chast

LIFE AND LETTERS

SOMEONE SAYS YES TO IT

Gertrude Stein, Alice B. Toklas, and "The Making of Americans."

BY JANET MALCOLM

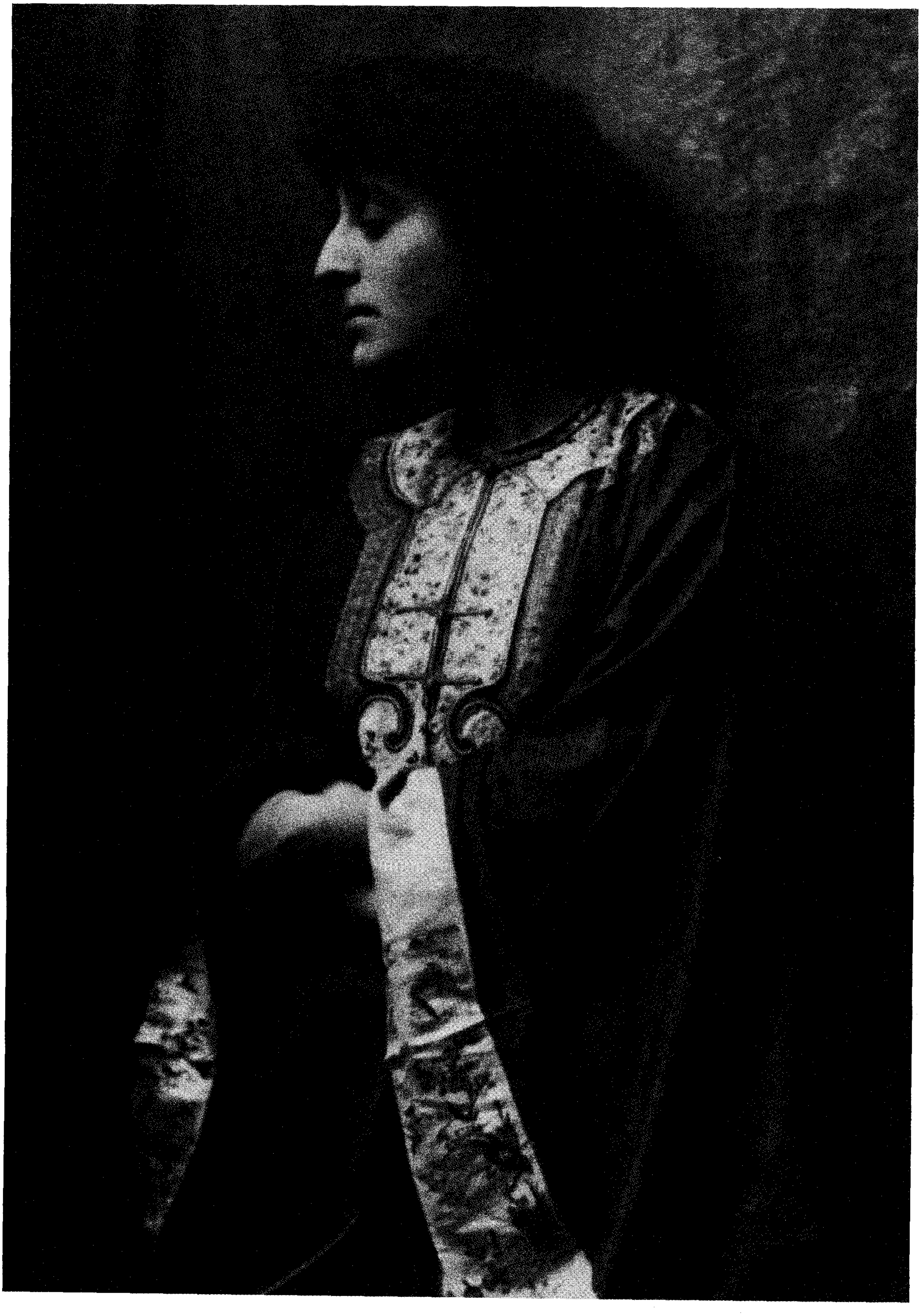
Stein in Paris, around 1904. Opposite: Toklas, photographed by Arnold Genthe, in San Francisco, around 1906.

I

I think it is safe to say that most well-read people in the English-speaking world have not read "The Making of Americans." The book (in its only available edition) is nine hundred and twenty-five pages long and is set in small dense type, forty-four lines to the page. It is believed to be a modernist masterpiece, but is not felt to be a necessary reading experience. It is more a monument than a text, a heroic achievement of writing, a near-impossible feat of reading.

For years, even writers on Stein felt absolved from reading all, if not any, of the forbidding volume. Edmund Wilson, in his chapter on Stein in "Axel's Castle" (1931), writes, almost with pride, certainly without shame, "I have not read ["The Making of Americans"] all through, and I do not know whether it is possible to do so." He goes on, "With sentences so regularly rhythmical, so needlessly prolix, so many times repeated and ending so often in present participles, the reader is all too soon in a state, not to follow the slow becoming of life, but simply to fall asleep." When Marianne Moore reviewed the book for *The Dial*, in 1926, she was less candid than Wilson about her inability to read it all through, but it is obvious from the review that she didn't get much past the first fifty pages.

Stein's own friends felt under no pressure to read the book. "Of course I have not had time to do anything more



BANCROFT LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY. OPPOSITE: YALE COLLECTION OF AMERICAN LITERATURE, BEINECKE RARE BOOK AND MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY than dip into many parts of it," the painter Harry Phelan Gibb unapologetically wrote to her in October, 1925, feeling that it was enough to say, "Only a few pages tells you when there is something remarkable and great." Sherwood Anderson wrote with similar aplomb—and language—"I had saved your book for the quiet of the country and have been dipping into it." The friends who did more than dip into the book were at a loss to talk about it. "To me, now, it is a little like the Book of Genesis," Carl Van Vechten, who later became Stein's literary executor, babbled after reading an early section. "There is something Biblical about you, Gertrude. Certainly there is something Biblical about you."

In recent years, as interest in Stein has grown in the American academy, the shirking of the reading of "The Making of Americans" has fallen out of favor. Critics who write about the book are expected to read it. Richard Bridgman, one of the earliest non-shirkers, gives an admirable précis of the text in his study "Gertrude Stein in Pieces" (1970); but he does not underestimate the book's difficulty. "[It] gives the impression of someone learning how to drive," he writes (as if from the passenger seat) and goes on, "Periodically there are smooth stretches, but these are interrupted by bumps, lurches, wild wrenchings of the wheel, and sudden brakings. All the while the driver can be heard muttering reminders and encouragements to herself, imprecations, and cries of alarm."

For a long time, I put off reading "The Making of Americans." Every time I picked up the book, I put it down again. It was too heavy and thick, and the type was too small and dense. I finally solved the problem of its weight and bulk by taking a kitchen knife and cutting it into six sections. The book thus became portable and (so to speak) readable. As I read, I realized that in carving up the book I had unwittingly made a physical fact of its stylistic and thematic inchoateness. It is a book that is actually a number of books. It is called a novel, but in reality it is a series of long meditations on, among other things, the author's refusal (and inability) to write a novel.

The meditations begin only after an attempt is made to write a conventional nineteenth-century novel. The heroine is a young woman named Julia Dehning, the eldest daughter of a rich, first-generation American immigrant family, who is about to make a disastrous marriage to a bounder. Stein writes in the guise of an outspoken omniscient narrator, an "I" who likes to interject her own tart views but still accepts standard novelistic norms. On page 33, she suddenly breaks loose from these norms:

> Bear it in your mind my reader, but truly I never feel it that there ever can be for me any such a creature, no it is this scribbled and dirty and lined paper that is really to be to me always my receiver,—but anyhow reader, bear it in your mind—will there be for me ever any such a creature,—what I have said always before to you, that this that I write down a little each day here on my scraps of paper for you is not just an ordinary kind of novel with a plot and conversations to amuse you, but a record of a decent family's progress respectably lived by us and our fathers and our mothers, and our grand-fathers, and grand-mothers, and this is by me carefully a little each day to be written down here. . . . And so listen while I tell you all about us, and wait while I hasten slowly forwards, and love, please, this history of this decent family's progress.

This passage is remarkable for many reasons, most of all, perhaps, for Stein's repeated mention of the paper on which she writes. Like Maurice Denis's provocative dictum of 1890—"Remember that a picture, before being a battle horse or a nude, or some anecdote—is essentially a flat surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order"—Stein's invocation of her scribbled and dirty and lined paper comes out of the new climate, called modernism, that French painters are being warmed by and that she is one of the first literary artists to feel. Her book is going to concern itself with the conditions of its making in the way the paintings of Cézanne and Picasso and Matisse concern themselves with the conditions of theirs. Hovering over the work is an image of a woman sitting at a desk stubbornly performing her daily task of covering blank pieces of paper with words; and this woman is the real heroine of the book. Julia Dehning disappears and only reappears three hundred pages later; other characters come and go; but the writer figure remains. The jolts and lurches of her engagement with writing are the book's plot. The reader never really cares what happens to the characters but becomes increasingly curious about what their author is up to.

Stein now turns to the family of the bounder, the Hersland family, which is based on her own family. She adopts a new style. She has already written "Three

"Listen up, everybody—Charles is going to fill us in about the Grenache grape."

Lives," and the new style has some resemblance to the earlier work in its abstractness but has none of its concision. It is as if Stein had made a rule for herself that she must allow every subject to exhaust itself before letting go of it. Nothing is ever said once. It is always said many times, with slight variations creeping in, as they do in repeats in music. Thus we read over and over about the mother Fanny Hersland, the "little unimportant mother," who

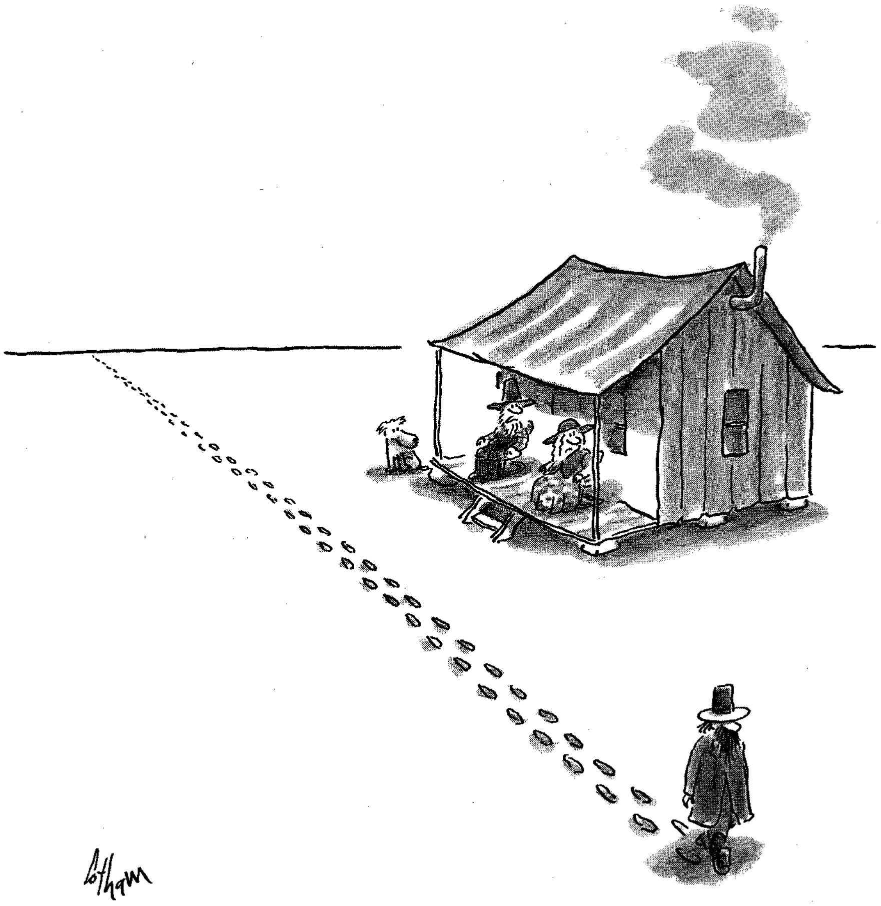
> *was lost among them and mostly they forgot* about her, now she died away among them and they never thought about her, sometimes they would be good to her, mostly for them she had no existence in her and then she died away and the gentle scared little woman was all that they ever after remembered of her.

Stein's own mother, Amelia, had died of cancer when Stein was fourteen. In "Everybody's Autobiography" (1937), Stein writes, "When my mother died she had been ill a long time and had not been able to move around and so when she died we had all already had the habit of doing without her." She adds, "I have told all about her in 'The Making of Americans' but that is a story and after all what is the use of its being a story. If it is real enough what is the use of it being a story." And, "What is the use of remembering anything. There is none." But remembering had great use for Stein in the writing of "The Making of Americans." The passages about the "unimportant" mother are some of the finest writing in the book. In Stein's oblique telling of her story of unacceptable loss, she achieves an extraordinary level of expressiveness; the refrain about the mother's unimportance has the effect, of course, of implying the opposite.

When Stein wrote the Fanny Hersland section, she was still at an early stage in her journey; her book was to turn into something that no one could have predicted—something so monstrously peculiar that although it is possible to finish, it is impossible to sum up. Each critic must be content to grapple with one or two boughs of this redwood of literature. One generalization that can be made, however, is that it is a dark, death-ridden work, and the Fanny Hersland section establishes the atmosphere that is to pervade it to the end. After Stein completed the book, in 1911, this atmosphere lifts, and never again descends on her work. Even "Wars I Have Seen," her book about the Second World War, has the confident playfulness that we associate with the figure of Gertrude Stein. "The Making of Americans" was a work that Stein evidently had to get out of her system—almost like a person having to vomit—before she could become Gertrude Stein as we know her. A great outpouring of grief and anger and sorrow and doubt had to take place before the certainties and jollities of the mature writer could come into being. The cool ease of the mature Stein was preceded by writing of hysterical, sometimes almost mad intensity. As "The Making of Americans" progresses, it less and less resembles a novel and more and more a morass into which writer and reader are sinking together.

It is well to remember while reading this strangest of strange books that Stein did not start out as a writer. From Radcliffe, on the advice of her teacher William James, she went to medical school at Johns Hopkins in preparation for a career in psychology. In her last year, she flunked several courses and declined to take them over in order to graduate. In "The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas," Stein recalls the end of her medical career with amused relief: "Her very close friend Marion Walker pleaded with her, she said, but Gertrude Gertrude remember the cause of women, and Gertrude Stein said, you don't know what it is to be bored." However, the end of Stein's medical career did not mark the end of her interest in psychology; if anything, that interest increased. She and her brother Leo, who had joined her in Baltimore, and with whom she lived in Paris between 1903 and 1913, obsessively took apart their friends' characters and then—for their own good, of course—told them what was the matter with them.

This moralistic hobby became the basis of the program of character analysis that takes over "The Making of Americans" at around page 290 and puts



"It takes years before some people are comfortable enough to say hello."

an end to any resemblance whatever the work may have to a regular novel. The "decent family's progress" comes to a halt. Now, in addition to—and for many pages instead of—rendering the Dehnings and the Herslands, Stein writes about unnamed individuals who exemplify the various kinds of people there are in the world, and whom she proposes to classify the way Linnaeus classified plants. According to Stein's system of classification, everyone in the world is either "independent dependent" or "dependent independent": "Independent dependent being is when the natural way of fighting is attacking, dependent independent being is when the natural way of fighting is resisting." Stein makes her determination of what people are by listening to them repeat themselves. At the outset, she exults in the almost magical power of understanding that has come to her:

> They are all of them repeating and I hear it. I love it and I tell it. I love it and now I will write it. This is now a history of my love of it. I hear it and I love it and I write it. . . . They live it and I hear it and I see it and I love it and now and always I will write it.

But Stein's triumph is short-lived. "Loving repeating" is not enough. "There are so many complicated kinds of these two kinds of them," she realizes, "so many ways of mixing, disguising, complicated using of their natures in many of them, so complicated that mostly it is confusing to me who know it of them that there are these kinds of them and always more and more I know it of them and always it is confusing." She struggles against her growing realization that actually she doesn't understand people at all:

> Perhaps no one ever gets a complete history of any one. This is very discouraging thinking. I am very sad now in this feeling. Always, hearing something, gives to some a sad feeling of realising everything they have not been hearing and that they are not knowing and perhaps they can never have really in them the complete history of any one.

And: "I am all unhappy in this writing. . . . I am nervous and driving and unhappy in it." In her desperation, she begins to admit strange reifications into her system:

> Resisting being in men and women . . . is like a substance and in some it is as I was saying solid and sensitive all through it to stimulation, in some almost wooden, in some muddy and engulfing, in some thin almost like gruel, in some solid in some parts and in other parts all liquid, in some with holes like air-holes in it, in some a thin layer of it, in some hardened and cracked all through it.

And:

> I am thinking of attacking being not as an earthy kind of substance but as a pulpy not dust not dirt but a more mixed up substance, it can be slimy, gelatinous, gluey, white opaquy kind of thing and it can be white and vibrant, and clear and heated and this is all not very clear to me.

Her images grow ever more repellent:

> I am always feeling each kind of them as a substance darker, lighter, thinner, thicker, muddier, clearer, smoother, lumpier, granularer, mixeder, simpler like every kind there is of earth or of anything and always I am feeling in each one of them their kind of stuff as much in them, as little in them, as all of a piece in them, as lumps in them held together sometimes by parts of the same sometimes by other kinds of stuff in them. . . . Some are always whole though the being in them is all a mushy mass with a skin to hold them in and so make one.

The anti-novel seems to be turning into a kind of nervous breakdown. The author has regressed to a state where she evidently cannot differentiate writing from shitting:

> Sometimes it comes out of me I am filled full of knowing and it bursts out from me, sometimes it comes very slowly from me, sometimes it comes sharply from me, sometimes it comes out of me to amuse me, sometimes it comes out of me as a way of doing a duty for me, sometimes it comes brilliantly out of me, sometimes it comes as a way of playing by me.

Perhaps no other book makes it so plain to the reader that it is being written over time, and that, like life, it is inconsistent and changeable. Just when it looks as if Stein had taken permanent leave of her senses and will never stop gibbering about the mushy sausage-like things she has replaced her characters with, she snaps out of it and returns to the Herslands. She tells a story from the early childhood of Martha Hersland, a rather dispirited girl who "was never really very interesting to any one," and who is based on her young self:

> This one was a very little one then and she was running and she was in the street and it was a muddy one and she had an umbrella that she was dragging and she was crying. "I will throw the umbrella in the mud," she was saying, she was very little then, she was just beginning her schooling, "I will throw the umbrella in the mud" she said and no one was near her and she was dragging the umbrella and bitterness possessed her, "I will throw the umbrella in the mud" she was saying and nobody heard her, the others had run ahead to get home and they had left her, "I will throw the umbrella in the mud," and there was desperate anger in her; "I have throwed the umbrella in the mud" burst from her, she had thrown the umbrella in the mud and that was the end of it all in her.

This story has been much quoted—by Stein herself, among others—and it has the ring of a seminal memory. But no sooner does Stein tell it than she repudiates it. "It is very hard telling from any incident in any one's living what kind of being they have in them," she writes, and goes on, "It is very hard to know of any one the being in them from one or two things they have been doing that some one is telling about them. . . . Knowing real being in men and women is a very slow proceeding and always more and more this is very certain."

Stein's own occasional reversions to conventional narration of the "one or two things they have been doing that some one is telling about them" sort give the book a movement like that of a train that now and then comes up to speed but mostly crawls along because of track work. Stein keeps returning to the project it appears she has abandoned—that of writing fiction—and then berates herself for doing it badly. "Sometimes I am almost despairing," she writes. "I know the being in Miss Dounor that I am beginning describing, I know the being in Miss Charles that I am soon going to be beginning describing, I know the being in Mrs. Redfern, I have been describing the being in that one. I know the being in each one of these three of them and I am almost despairing for *I am doubting if I am knowing it poignantly enough* to be really knowing it, to be really knowing the being in any one of the three of them. Always now I am despairing." (Italics mine.)

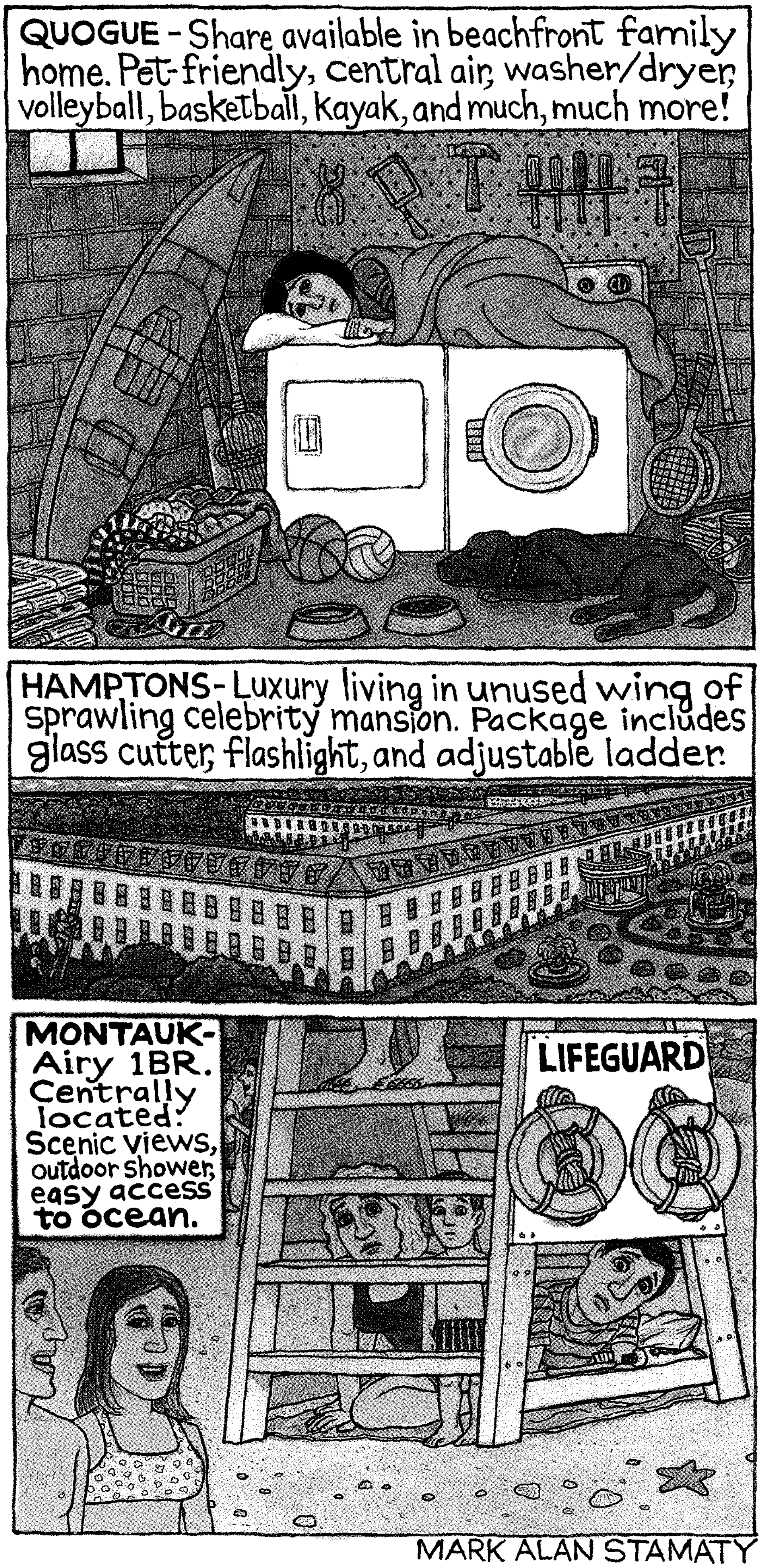
Tolstoy and Dickens and Jane Austen knew it poignantly enough. Stein, realizing that she is not equipped to create fictional characters and yet believing herself to be a literary genius, stubbornly persists in her task of filling pieces of paper every day with her earnest and remarkable thoughts. Presently, she makes another daunting discovery:

> I have not any dramatic imagination for action in them, I only can know about action in them from knowing action they have been doing any of them. . . . I cannot ever construct action for them to be doing.

In other words, she cannot invent. She can write only about what has actually happened to people she knows. And yet she is hardly doing what other writers do who lack dramatic imagination—journalists, biographers, memoirists. If her characters do not resemble the characters of fiction (it is amusing to think of Anna Karenina as a mass of gritty dried stuff held together by a skin, or of Emma Woodhouse as something white and gelatinous), neither do they resemble the characters of biography, memoir, and reportage. The characters in "The Making of Americans" resemble shades. You never see them. Stein makes sure that you know almost nothing concrete about them, sometimes not even their sex. This is truly a new way of writing a novel, a novel where the author withholds the characters from the reader. Stein regards her characters as if from a great distance and, at the same time, seems, in her desperate eagerness to understand them, almost to be taking them into her mouth and tasting them. Only the narrator remains a full-blooded person, for whom one feels increasing sympathy and a sort of stunned admiration.

What the stakes are for the narrator—why her strange taxonomy is of such desperate importance to her—becomes clearer as the book progresses. It is some sort of defense against death. Death weaves in and out of the narrative and takes it over in the end, in the solemn and mysterious section about the troubled second Hersland son, David, who obscurely wills his own early death. "Dead is dead," the narrator grimly observes midway through the book. But some pages later she writes of the comfort she derives from the idea that every individual is a type or kind. "This is a pleasant feeling, this is comforting to me just now when I am thinking of every one always growing older and then dying, now when I am thinking about each one being sometime a sick one each one being sometime a dead one." She goes on in her incantatory way, "I am having a pleasant completely completed feeling and always then it is a comfortable and calming thing this being certain that each one is one of a kind of them in men and women and that there are always very many of each kind existing . . . that each one sometime is to be a dead one is then not discouraging." The

LAST-MINUTE SUMMER RENTALS BY MARK ALAN STAMATY


QUOGUE - Share available in beachfront family home. Pet-friendly, central air, washer/dryer, volleyball, basketball, kayak, and much, much more!
HAMPTONS - Luxury living in unused wing of sprawling celebrity mansion. Package includes glass cutter, flashlight, and adjustable ladder.
MONTAUK - Airy 1BR. Centrally located. Scenic views, outdoor shower, easy access to ocean.
LIFEGUARD
MARK ALAN STAMATY

"I've just married your Uncle Leonard, and I'm looking forward to your support."

narrator does not explain why her fear of death is allayed by the idea of types. We can only conjecture that it is less threatening for her to contemplate the extinction of "one of a kind" than of an irreplaceable, unique individual. But, whatever she means, her pleasant confident feeling is, as always, short-lived. "I am in desolation and my eyes are large with needing weeping and I have a flush from feverish feeling," she writes. "I tell you I cannot bear it this thing that I cannot be realising experiencing in each one being living." Her typology is no longer sufficient. Now she wants to have intimate and complete knowledge of every individual in the world and, of course, "I know I will not, and I am one knowing being a dead one and not being a living one, I who am not believing that I will be realising each one's experiencing." The narrator doesn't spell out the connection between her fear about death and her realization that she is not omniscient. Again, we can only conjecture. She herself is aware of the incommunicability of her maddeningly complex thoughts:

> I mean, I mean and that is not what I mean, I mean that not any one is saying what they are meaning, I mean that I am feeling something, I mean that I mean something and I mean that not any one is thinking, is feeling, is saying, is certain of that thing, I mean that not any one can be saying, thinking, feeling, not any one can be certain of that thing, I mean I am not certain of that thing, I am not ever saying, thinking, feeling, being certain of this thing, I mean, I mean, I know what I mean.

"The Making of Americans" is a text of magisterial disorder. That its unruliness was not foreign to Stein is illustrated by a letter of 1897 from a fellow Harvard student named Leon Solomons, to whom she had sent a scientific article. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself for the careless manner in which you have written it up," Solomons wrote, and went on:

> The trouble with the article as it stands is that one has to hunt around too much to find the important points,—it is as bewildering as a detailed map of a large country on a small scale. What it needs is relief, perspective. You must make perfectly clear to yourself just what you regard as the essentials of the work, and devote all your energies to bringing them out. As it is one is apt to miss the essentials in irrelevant or at least less important details. . . . Don't be afraid of leaving things out. . . . In short don't emulate our friends the Germans, but be a little French.

Stein could become a little French only after being very German. "Nothing must ever be thrown out," she writes in one of her riffs on the maddening difficulty of seeing "a whole one" through the ever-murkier lens of her apparatus of classification. She refuses to see things clearly that can only be seen darkly. She would rather groan and beat her breast than impose a false order on disorderly complexity.

It takes a long time to read "The Making of Americans." The language Stein writes in (after cutting herself loose from the conventional language of the opening Dehning section) is not the transparent language through which we enter stories, forgetting we are reading. We never forget we are reading while reading "The Making of Americans." In a recent talk about the book, John Ashbery said that after years of pretending he had read it (he could never get past page 30), he finally did, and was glad. He added, "I would like to do it again, although I've already read it about three or four times, since I had to read every sentence, I think, at least that many times." Stein's language draws attention to itself the way the brushstrokes of modernist paintings do. It forces rereading. (I did not have Ashbery's fortitude and read the book only twice.)

Stein's vocabulary is small and monotonous. When she uses a new word, it is like the entrance of a new character. It is thrilling. "Every word I am ever using in writing has for me very existing being," she writes. "Using a word I have not yet been using in my writing is to me very difficult and a peculiar feeling. . . .

There are only a few words and with these mostly always I am writing that have for me completely entirely existing being, in talking I use many more of them of words I am not living but talking is another thing, in talking one can be saying mostly anything, often then I am using many words I never could be using in writing."

Stein seems to be transcribing rather than transforming thought as she writes, making a kind of literal translation of what is going on in her mind. The alacrity with which she catches her thoughts before they turn into stale standard expressions may be the most singular of her accomplishments. Her influence on twentieth-century writing is nebulous. No school of Stein ever came into being. But every writer who lingers over Stein's sentences is apt to feel a little stab of shame over the heedless predictability of his own.

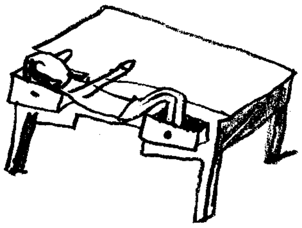
2

On November 24, 1952, Alice B. Toklas wrote to Carl Van Vechten about the death of Basket II, the white poodle she and Gertrude Stein had acquired in 1938 to replace the recently deceased Basket I. "His going has stunned me—for some time I have realized how much I depended upon him and so it is the beginning of living for the rest of my days without anyone who is dependent upon me for anything," Toklas told Van Vechten, leaving unspoken an obvious parallel: the Toklas-Stein relationship. Stein had been the extra-smart, unruly pet whom Toklas took exemplary care of and upon whose dependence she depended. The hole that Stein's death left in Toklas's life was never filled. There was no Gertrude II. After Stein died, in 1946, Toklas took on some canine characteristics of her own. She tended the shrine of Stein's literary and personal legend with the devotion of the dog at its master's grave. She would snarl if anyone came too close to the monument.

In her letter to Van Vechten, Toklas did not dwell on the death of the dog but quickly went on to write of developments in "the work with Katz," a project that was making increasing claims on her time and attention. A few weeks before Basket succumbed, Leon Katz, a thirty-three-year-old Columbia University doctoral candidate, who was preparing a dissertation on Stein's early writings, appeared at Toklas's apartment, on the Rue Christine (Toklas and Stein had moved there from the Rue de Fleurus in 1938), like a proleptic gift of distraction from the gods. He dangled before her a remarkable scholar's treasure. In 1948, while working in the Stein archive at the Yale library, Katz had come across a cache of small notebooks filled with Stein's pencilled scribbles: notes she had made between 1902 and 1911 while composing "The Making of Americans" and other early texts, and had never shown to anyone, even to Toklas (except for a few pages she had once let her read). The notebooks had come to Yale in 1938, in two parcels wrapped in brown paper, thrown in among manuscripts that Stein had sent over on the urging of her friend Thornton Wilder, who saw that war was coming. Stein had apparently forgotten what was in the brown paper parcels, and Toklas had assumed they contained manuscripts. After the bundles were unwrapped, no one at Yale took particular notice of their contents.

Katz found the notes of electrifying interest. He saw them as a kind of Rosetta Stone with which to decode "The Making of Americans," and received permission from Van Vechten and Donald Gallup, the curator of the Stein archive at Yale, to make a transcript of them; further, he was granted exclusive rights to publish them. He came to Toklas to guide him through the maze of the notes, scrawled by Stein at odd moments and hedged by the obscurity as well as shimmering with the authenticity of writing not intended for any eye but one's own. He had hundreds of questions to ask Toklas about the dozens of people who appeared in them; he had already interviewed a large number of Stein's still living friends and relatives.

Toklas liked young men, the way Stein had, though she didn't always like the same young men. She had never liked Hemingway, for example. But this young man was "ever so nice—gentle and sensitive and amiable," as she described him to Van Vechten in the letter of November 24th. Not that she immediately trusted him. Toklas, then seventy-five, was the least credulous of women. With Stein, she had played the role of the suspicious protector of a vulnerable, openhearted child. (In her letters to Van Vechten, she referred to Stein as "Baby.") But Toklas's defenses—like those of the old woman in "The Aspern Papers"—could be penetrated. Katz's charm obviously affected her, as did his assurance that he had no immediate plans for publication. The edition of the notes she would be assisting him to prepare would indefinitely repose in the Yale library as a "sealed manuscript." ("It is to be hoped that Katz's work will not be open to even students for a considerable period," she wrote to Van Vechten.) But perhaps most decisive in Toklas's willingness to answer Katz's questions was her own curiosity about the notebooks. "You now see that eagerness to see the notes of which Gertrude showed me only a small part—led me on," she wrote to the scholar Donald Sutherland on January 8, 1953. "Nothing but really nothing could have stopped me."



Thus from November, 1952, to February, 1953, eight hours a day, four days a week, Toklas received Katz in her sitting room and pored over the notes with him, "line by line—word by word," as he interrogated her about Stein in the early years of her writing career. (They worked with a four-hundred-page typed transcript that Katz had made.) At first, before her suspicions were put completely to rest, Toklas was evasive when Katz asked questions that "bothered me," as she recalled to Sutherland. "One answered by refusing to answer very much like an FBI investigation." But, once the matter of publication was settled, "my answers and asides," as she put it to Van Vechten, "became of an indiscretion that will please you." The notes themselves were, as Toklas excitedly realized, a font of indiscretion—and self-revelation. Toklas wrote to Sutherland:

> [Gertrude]—alone with herself and the originals of her characters and portraits—could be of a frankness that makes indiscre-

> tion appear pale. Carl and Gallup hastily looked through the notes one afternoon after Katz had copied them and . . . were surprised to learn how greatly Gertrude had exposed not only people she knew . . . but herself.

In his dissertation (accepted by Columbia in 1963), called "The First Making of 'The Making of Americans': A Study Based on Gertrude Stein's Notebooks and Early Versions of Her Novel (1902-08)," Katz predicted that after the publication of Stein's notebooks "the biographical legend formed around her name, largely perpetrated by her own autobiographical writing, will undergo major revisions of emphasis." However, Katz did not go back on his word to Toklas and rush the notebooks into print. Fifty-nine years after Stein's death and thirty-eight years after Toklas's, Katz has yet to publish the notes, although Van Vechten gave him permission to do so, and Liveright publishers signed a contract with him to produce an edition in which his annotations and Toklas's commentaries would appear, to be published in 1974, Stein's centenary year. The original handwritten notebooks and Katz's typewritten transcript may now be read at the Beinecke Library, at Yale, but Katz's notes of his interviews with Toklas in Paris remain locked in his possession—no scholar has ever seen them. This is not to say that Katz kept Toklas's indiscretions to himself. His dissertation is filled with them—indeed, is, in certain respects, poised on them.

Although "The First Making of 'The Making of Americans'" never came out as a printed book, in the world of Stein criticism and scholarship it has become a kind of cult classic. (It is available in typescript form from Proquest Information and Learning, in Ann Arbor.) References to it appear in all serious writing on Stein since the sixties. Virgil Thomson, reviewing a group of books on Stein in *The New York Review of Books* in 1971, articulates the feeling of excitement that an encounter with the dissertation engenders. He writes of "a new pinnacle, high and possibly dangerous to inexpert navigation, like a partly exposed iceberg, known as the Katz manuscript." Thomson had in fact read only a version of some of the dissertation's most interesting pages, published as a preface to a collection of Stein writings called "Fernhurst, Q.E.D. and Other Early Writings." But he had read enough to grasp the dissertation's distinction, noting that it "peers out from odd footnotes" in the other books under review, "like a sudden searchlight."

Thomson's association of the dissertation both with a searchlight and with an iceberg has a rightness to it. As well as illuminating an obscure period of Stein's life, the thesis also threatens the image of Stein that Toklas had been at such pains to preserve. "Much of the Stein that is concealed in the autobiographies is revealed only too plainly and unpleasantly in the Notebooks," Katz writes, as he prepares, with the assistance of Toklas's indiscretions and the badmouthings of Stein's relatives and friends, to render the young Stein as a confused and morose young woman, recovering from an unhappy lesbian love affair, and dazedly attempting to write. Toklas would surely have been mortified by Katz's portrait of Stein, but there is no reason to think that she read the dissertation. In 1963, she was eighty-six years old and could hardly see. She died in 1967, in apparent ignorance of Katz's betrayal.

Katz challenges the "Autobiography" 's picture of Stein's early life in Paris as the lovely adventure of an American who, as Stein writes, "happened to be in the heart of an art movement of which the outside world at that time knew nothing." Katz bluntly points out that, on the contrary, "far from living on the horizon of current French art," Stein lived in a kind of ghetto of American relatives and friends, whose French acquaintance was limited almost exclusively to servants, tradesmen, and concierges. Stein's first four years in Paris, Katz writes, were "a period of the most relentless despair, surrender of ambition and psychological disorientation. She became passive, cynical, she was moved to do nothing." He adds:

> Later, times such as these were lost to her in a mist of self-congratulation, daily pleasures and indeed of a newly reinforced egomania that had begun to overtake her after she finished "The Making of Americans" and recognized frankly and with a kind of astonished joy the overwhelming scope of her achievements. "Slowly I was knowing that I was a genius." And with the years, that knowledge was increasingly borne in on her and manifested itself in uglier and uglier ways. She did not recall the dull, stubbornly persistent miseries of her first months in Paris.

The notebooks are the record of a peevish soul trying to break out of a trap. Their author is an irritable and hypercritical young woman, living with a brother she is beginning to hate and among a set of American women she thinks she is trying to understand but whom she merely despises. In Katz's reconstruction, much of Stein's time was spent with relatives and girlfriends, sitting around the house analyzing each other according to strange systems of disapproval. A neurotic young woman with a harelip named Annette Rosenshine, who had been brought to Paris from San Francisco by Stein's brother Michael and his wife, Sarah (who had also settled in Paris and were part of the analyzing group), became a special "patient" of Gertrude's and evidently almost expired from the daily sessions of, as Katz writes, "cryptic formulae, bludgeonings, denunciations and ephemeral suggestions for helping herself that bewildered the woman but that she had to accept on faith." Harriet Levy, also from San Francisco (she was Toklas's roommate in Paris for two years), was another victim of Stein's therapy. Stein seemed to dislike her even more than she disliked Rosenshine, and wrote about her with relentless malice. "Note in Harriet the absolute lack of self-restraint in eating in general dirtiness of habit of busting things," she says in one entry. In another (pairing Levy with an equally despicable Claribel Cone) she writes, "Harriet is sordid and brilliant and fairly mean. Claribel is big and inchoate and bland, both have an incredible amount of vanity which is probably the correlative of the passion for comfort. They are not egoists really. They don't exist vitally enough to be that." And: "Harriet is a pill. She is a stinker."

Even Alice Toklas isn't spared Stein's hatefulness. "She is low clean through to the bottom crooked," Stein writes of her future life partner, now just another person to trash, and goes on:

> A liar of the most sordid, unillumined, undramatic unimaginative prostitute type, coward, ungenerous, conscienceless, mean, vulgarly triumphant and remorseless, caddish, in short just plain rotten low like Zobel but not dangerous not effective, no evil. . . . Absolutely no distinguishing sense for people. Self-knowledge but no consciousness of the

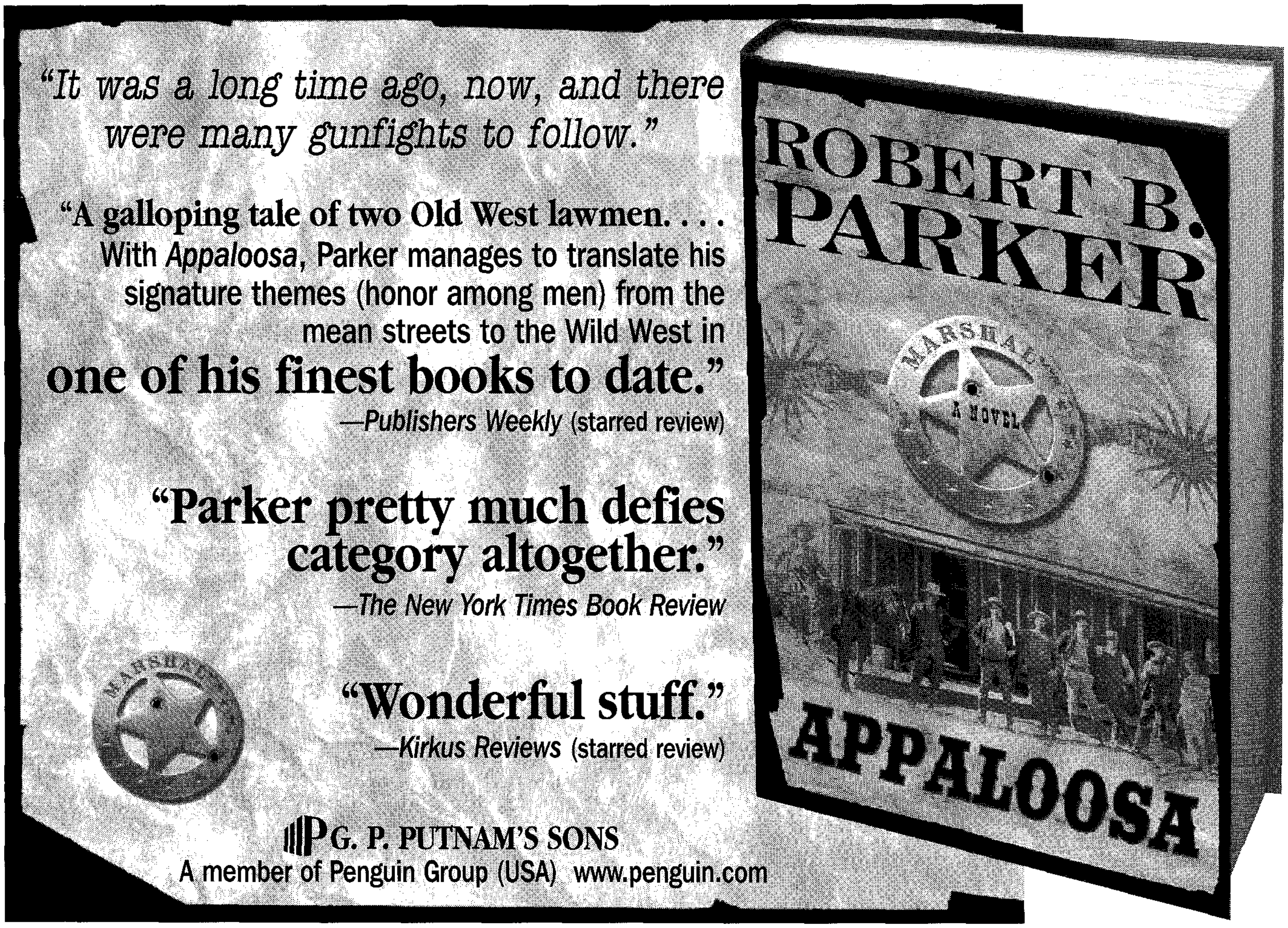
> significant, of the meaning of the things she knows, the practical intelligence of the Hellenising Jew but not the practical instinct as Stern has it.

And:

> Alice runs herself by her intellect but there is not enough intellect in her to go around and so she fails in every way.

The love affair that put Stein in such a bad mood began in 1901, when she was at Johns Hopkins, and ended, as Katz writes, "with a moan and a whimper" a few years later. In 1903, Stein wrote a novella about the affair called "Q.E.D." and put it away in a cupboard, where it lay undisturbed for nearly thirty years. In 1932, she came upon it while rummaging in her closet for something else, but it wasn't published until 1950. One of the coups of Katz's interview with Toklas was his identification of Stein's lover as a woman named May Bookstaver. Under Katz's velvet-gloved prodding, Toklas confirmed that Bookstaver was the original of the character Helen in "Q.E.D.," and went on to tell him that almost all of the book's dialogue was based on letters between Stein and Bookstaver, which, as Katz writes in a footnote, "Miss Stein had before her and followed closely during the writing of the book." Unfortunately, Katz continues, "the correspondence of dialogue and letters cannot be verified. When the novel came to light in 1932, and Miss Toklas discovered its biographical connection, she destroyed all Miss Bookstaver's letters 'in a passion.' " But this does not deter Katz—emboldened, perhaps, by Stein's confession in "The Making of Americans" that she cannot invent—from taking Toklas at her word and treating the dialogue of "Q.E.D." as interchangeable with what passed in the post between Stein and Bookstaver. Katz argues that Stein's desperate thirst to understand everyone in the world derived in great part from the agony of her inability to fathom her lover. He sees the shadow of the affair hovering over "The Making of Americans" and giving it much of its intensity. Katz's dissertation goes on to examine other influences on Stein's typology (among them a book called "Sex and Character," by the brilliant and crazy anti-Semite Jew Otto Weininger), but his commentary on the Bookstaver romance is the work's white-hot center, the source of its fame and mana.

I first heard of Katz a few years ago from a trio of distinguished scholars named Ulla E. Dydo, Edward M. Burns, and William Rice, whose help I sought in reconstructing Stein and Toklas's wartime activities. Dydo is a small, elegant woman of eighty, who grew up in Switzerland and speaks with an accent that retains an edge of European exasperation. She has taught English at Vassar and at Brooklyn College, and is the author of "Gertrude Stein: The Language That Rises, 1923-1934" (2003), the editor of "A Stein Reader" (1993), and the co-editor, with Burns, of "The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Thornton Wilder" (1996). Burns, who had been a student



"It was a long time ago, now, and there were many gunfights to follow."

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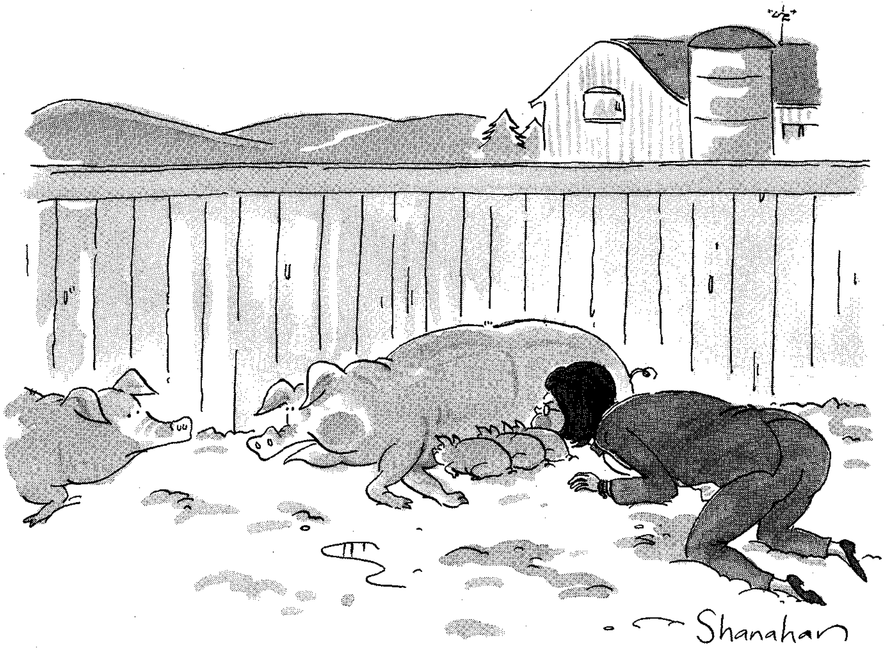
of Dydo's at Brooklyn College in the sixties, is sixty-one, a bit portly, and extremely affable. He teaches English at William Paterson University, in New Jersey, and is the editor of the two-volume "Letters of Gertrude Stein and Carl Van Vechten" (1986), "Staying On Alone: Letters of Alice B. Toklas" (1973), and "A Tour of the Darkling Plain: The Finnegans Wake Letters of Thornton Wilder and Adaline Glasheen" (2001). Rice, a gaunt man of seventy-five with a kind, sad face, is a painter and performance artist, who entered the world of Stein scholarship as a typist for Burns and over the years became a Stein scholar in his own right, if one without portfolio.

During a year of meetings I had with the trio, at Burns's Greenwich Village apartment, Katz would often come into the conversation (which ranged far beyond its putative subject), and he emerged as a magnetic, larger-than-life figure. The scholars always used the word "brilliant" about him and spoke of his interview with Toklas as a decisive event of Stein scholarship; it gleamed in their collective imagination as a kind of wondrous fable of charm and guile in the service of literature.

Dydo met Katz in 1955, when both were teaching at Vassar. "We immediately became good friends," she said. "We did a lot of talking. And he did a wonderful production of 'The Mother of Us All,' which I still remember. I remember it in my bones." Dydo went on to tell a story about Katz's dissertation which cleared up a minor mystery for me. In his prefatory acknowledgments, after citing Toklas and Gallup and various academic eminences, Katz writes, "Beyond all others is my debt to Mother Adele Fiske of Manhattanville, to whom it is impossible to express adequately my gratitude for her ministrations on behalf of this labor. Her devotion and her generosity were overwhelming and humbling." I wondered what the nun had done to merit such gratitude. What had her ministrations been? Dydo related that Katz had had to leave Vassar because he had not finished his dissertation. "The rules are that if you don't finish your dissertation within three years you have to look elsewhere for a job. Leon then went to teach at Manhattanville College, and the Mother Superior there understood what was going on with that dissertation. He was not writing it. And she gave him orders. 'You will leave at my door every night a certain number of pages'—I don't know how many, it doesn't matter. And he did. A mother—a real mother—is no good for that. A girlfriend, a boyfriend, an anything friend is no good for that. But a Mother Superior is excellent for that. I had tried—a bit. All of us had tried one way or another. But she was the one who got the Ph.D. out of him."



"My agent."

No Mother Adele appeared to get the annotated notebooks out of Katz. However, over the years he has dispensed to colleagues, like tidbits thrown to dogs, secrets Toklas told him which he didn't include in the dissertation. Dydo and Burns have been leading recipients of Katz's largesse. In "The Language That Rises," for example, Dydo writes, "According to Leon Katz . . . the quarrel [between Stein and Toklas] continued off and on until the second visit to Chicago, in March 1935, when Stein told Toklas she would leave her unless she stopped goading and bickering. Toklas told Katz she did stop." This stunning revelation appears nowhere in the Stein biographical literature—the very idea of Stein and Toklas splitting up seems inconceivable—but such is Katz's authority as the winkler-out of Toklas's secrets that it simply didn't occur to Dydo to doubt its truth, or to seek corroboration elsewhere.

Burns liked to tell the story of how Katz extracted the story of Bookstaver from Toklas by allowing her to believe that he knew more than he did: "Leon had got wind of the affair from one of the people he interviewed, and when he uttered the name 'May Bookstaver' to Alice she assumed that he knew everything. Actually he only knew one little detail." Dydo seamlessly continued Burns's story: "She said to him, 'Katz'—she always referred to him as 'Katz,' never as 'Leon'—'Katz, you're a detective,' and then she told him everything."

Another canonical story from the Katz-Toklas encounter has to do with Katz's handling of the delicate matter of Stein's malevolent descriptions of Toklas. "Leon waited until almost the end of his interviews with Alice before showing her the pages where Gertrude says horrible things about her," Burns said. "He had prepared her for it—he had told her how difficult this would be, how it might send her into God knows what state. She greeted him at the door with 'Give it to me,' and retired into the bedroom with the transcript. When she emerged, she said, 'At least she didn't accuse me of disloyalty.' "

Toklas could not have taken pleasure in Stein's portrait of her, but she may not have been seriously afflicted by it, either. Many happily married couples—in life and in fiction—can't stand each other when they first meet. Stein's en-

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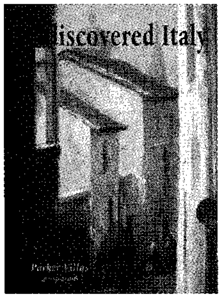

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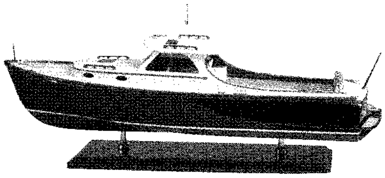

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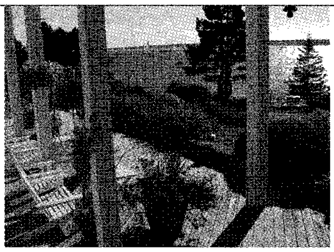

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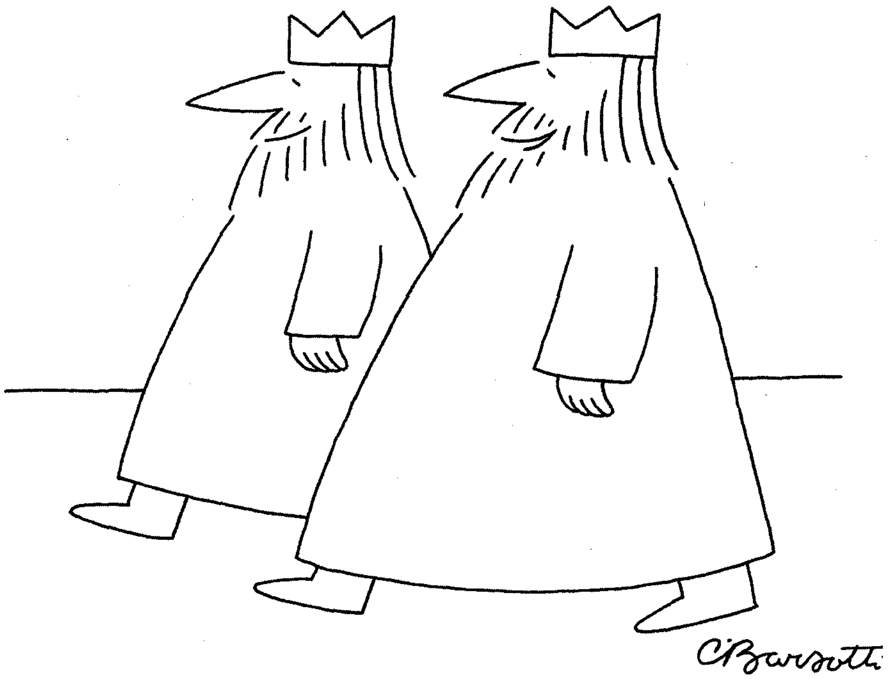

"Sure, meritocracies are fine, but why take the chance?"

• •

tries about Toklas were obviously written before they fell in love. That they did so had momentous consequences for Stein's art. Toklas liked and apparently understood "The Making of Americans" when no one else did. Leo had cruelly dismissed his sister's writing as incompetent. After Stein showed Toklas some pages of the book, and Toklas found the experience (as she recalls in her 1963 memoir, "What Is Remembered") "more exciting than anything else had ever been," she began typing the manuscript. The transformation of the dirty scraps of paper into clean pages of typescript was surely a pivotal event in the life of the work, which might well have foundered on Stein's anxiety about the maddening complexity of what she had undertaken. Toklas's belief in Stein's genius, made manifest by the growing pile of typed pages, sustained Stein in her excruciating endeavor. She celebrates "the perfect joy of finding some one, any one really liking something you are liking, making, doing, being," in a memorable passage:

> It is a very strange feeling when one is loving a clock that is to every one of your class of living an ugly and a foolish one and one really likes such a thing and likes it very much and liking it is a serious thing, or one likes a colored handkerchief that is very gay and every one of your kind of living thinks it a very ugly or a foolish thing and thinks you like it because it is a funny thing to like it and you like it with a serious feeling, or you like eating something and liking it is a childish thing to every one or you like something that is a dirty thing and no one can really like that thing or you write a book and while you write it you are ashamed for every one must think you a silly or a crazy one and yet you write it and you are ashamed, you know you will be laughed at or pitied by every one and you have a queer feeling and you are not very certain and you go on writing. Then some one says yes to it, to something you are liking, or doing or making and then never again can you have completely such a feeling of being afraid and ashamed that you had then when you were writing or liking the thing and not any one had said yes about the thing.

Some one says yes to it. The narrator's confusion and despair is to continue, but it is to be the confusion and despair of someone who knows she is "a great author inside one." As the "someone" who is validating Stein's work—and perhaps her lesbianism as well, as the images of odd clocks and colored handkerchiefs and "dirty things" seem to be obscurely signalling—Toklas is obviously no longer the low, brainless creature of the early notebook portrait. She is now the literary wife, the nurse who takes care of the writer-patient as he endures the illness of creation and its almost equally afflicting aftermath of publication. (In Stein's case, the afflicting aftermath was usually nonpublication. "The Making of Americans," for example, completed in 1911, was not published until 1925, in an edition of five hundred copies. Even then no happiness followed. In 1926, Stein received a mortifying letter from her publisher, Robert McAlmon, reminding her that the book's publication was "a philanthropic enterprise," and threatening to pulp the many copies that hadn't sold.)

In "What Is Remembered," Toklas renders a mysterious passage between herself and Stein on the second day of their acquaintance. They had met the previous afternoon at the Michael Steins' and Toklas had been dazzled. "She was a golden brown presence, burned by the Tuscan sun and with a golden glint in her warm brown hair," Toklas writes, and goes on to speak of Stein's wonderful voice—"deep, full, velvety like a great contralto's, like two voices"—and of her "beautifully modeled and unique head," like a Roman emperor's. Stein invites Toklas to come to her house the next day, and go for a walk, but when Toklas arrives at 27 Rue de Fleurus half an hour late, Stein

> had not her smiling countenance of the day before. She was now a vengeful goddess and I was afraid. I did not know what had happened or what was going to happen. Nor is it possible for me to tell about it now. After she had paced for some time about the long Florentine table . . . she stood in front of me and said, Now you understand. It is over. It is not too late to go for a walk. You can look at the pictures while I change my clothes.

Toklas's lateness does not account for Stein's fury (in fact, Toklas had sent Stein a *petit bleu* earlier in the day alerting her to her probable lateness). The passage is full of gaps. "I did not know what had happened or what was going to happen. Nor is it possible for me to tell about it now." To tell about what? Toklas is both telling and not telling. Her elusive sentences (written when she was in her eighties) gesture at secret meanings. The scene is like a dream. The little drama enacted in it is surely shorthand for some larger drama. We can only imagine what that drama was. But as the scene indicates—and the notebooks confirm—Stein and Toklas did not set out on their walk through life together quite as decisively and serenely as the legend has it. Much had to happen before Stein's dire view of Toklas gave way to the passionate love she expresses in her erotic poetry (most famously—and endlessly—in the poem "Lifting Belly").

Stein and Toklas lived together for nearly forty years, and Stein's death left a shattered Toklas. But her grief did not diminish—indeed, only strengthened—her literary wife's zeal. She oversaw the publication by Yale of Stein's unpublished (some might still say unpublishable) writings—eight volumes of them, with introductions by carefully chosen and in some cases thoroughly baffled friends. And she fiercely guarded Stein's reputation against all real or imagined threats. Biographers were given evasive, and, if necessary, untrue answers to questions. She herself "refused" to be written about. In September, 1950, after an interview with John Malcolm Brin-

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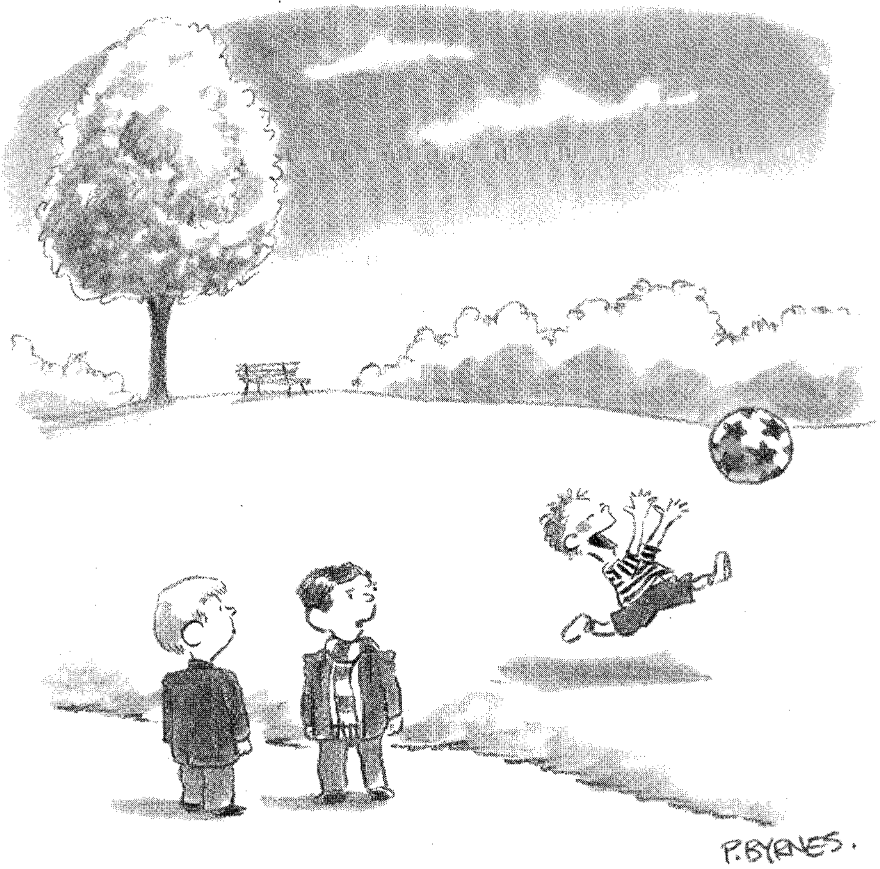
nin, one of Stein's early biographers, she proudly reported to Van Vechten, "I got him to exclude me from his book because the atmosphere of Baby's home was a private matter."

However, in 1955, when another biographer, an Englishwoman named Elizabeth Sprigge, threatened to give up her project after Toklas said "I refuse to be mentioned," Toklas backed down. At the time, Sprigge seemed like a good thing for the Baby cause—she had written a well-received biography of August Strindberg—and Toklas didn't want to lose her. Later, she did not think Sprigge was a good thing at all, referring to her as "La Sprigge" and pointing out "La Sprigge's unworthiness." When Sprigge's bland biography, "Gertrude Stein, Her Life and Work," came out, two years later, Toklas had the satisfaction of seeing it savaged in *The New Republic* by her friend Gilbert Harrison, then the magazine's owner and editor.

In a journal that Sprigge kept of her research (now at Yale), she chronicles the rise and fall of her relations with Toklas, which begin with exchanges of delicate spring flowers and end in a muddle of mutual dislike. Near the end of the journal, Sprigge reports a conversation with Thornton Wilder, who asks, "Has Alice a scunner against you?" and, when she tells him about "the gradual cooling of Alice's feelings for me," he says, "You are up against a lot of things. First those girls, *ces dames-là*, never really like or trust women. They like men as an audience, preferably young men, but anything in pants they prefer to a woman. There's a young man called Katz. . . . She'll give him far more than she's given you though she'll tell him not to publish it." Sprigge had met Katz the previous winter in New York—"We talked for four hours and went out to lunch—and we are friends"—but had no inkling of what Toklas had already "given" him. She renders him as "a Russian Jew in the early thirties. . . . Very serious, gentle, melancholy and adores Alice."

During the first year of my acquaintance with Burns, Dydo, and Rice, they urged me to do two things—to read "The Making of Americans" and to interview Leon Katz. For a long



"He goes to a real party preschool."

time, I resisted their urgings. Then, in the winter of 2004, when I was preparing for a trip to California (where Katz then lived), I gave in to the notion that Katz was a necessary stop on any journey into the Stein interior, and telephoned him. He warily consented to meet me, making many conditions, among them that he would not talk about his interview with Toklas, because he would be writing about it in his own book, and didn't want to be "scooped." I agreed to his terms, and plans were made for meeting at a Los Angeles airport near his house. "Leon is a real person," Dydo had said. "He's the kind of person you would find interesting, if I may say so, and I think I have the sense of what interests you, a little bit. You can say, 'Will it be a pleasure?' I don't know. It will certainly be of interest and what's of interest is a pleasure." On the telephone, Katz was as Dydo had described him; his realness and real charm came through and I looked forward to the meeting—which, however, never took place. A mixup about the date—he came to the airport on February 4th, and I had plane tickets for the next day—put an end to all possibility of interviewing Katz. He had been ambivalent from the start, and now the balance tipped in the direction of flight. He graciously accepted blame for the mixup, but declined to meet on the fifth—or on any other day.

When I reported the non-interview to Dydo, Burns, and Rice, their response was an unexpected release of suppressed anger. They took the mixup to be Katz's fault, a typical evasive action, and a kind of last straw. I myself was not so sure that the mixup was Katz's fault. I had my own ambivalence to consider; his conditions had irked me. But even after I persuaded the scholars to suspend judgment on the question of whose unconscious had misbehaved, they continued venting their resentment against Katz for his failure to produce the annotated edition of the notebooks. They felt frustrated and in some fundamental sense betrayed.

"This man has been sitting on this material for fifty years," Burns said. "No one has seen it. The book needs to be done. I once offered to take a sabbatical and work with him on it. But he ignored the offer. There is something deep inside himself that is preventing him from writing it."

"There was always a reason," Dydo said. "He had to make money, he had to support his aging parents. If it wasn't the aging parents, it was something else. He had very good jobs. He taught in the theatre departments at the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon, Cornell, Yale, and U.C.L.A. He also wrote avant-garde plays, good ones. Eddie and I had many exchanges with him in the early years, we had many questions about Gertrude and Alice. We would call him and he would answer. Then gradually over the years there was less and less of that."

"In the early years, we would ask him how the work on the book was coming," Burns said. "Then we ceased asking."

"What does he look like?" I said, caught in the spell of the absent and yet always present Katz.

"He's good-looking," Dydo said.

"Now completely white hair," Burns said.

"He takes good care of his body," Dydo said.

"Is he small or large?" I asked. Sprigge's "Russian Jew" had evoked a bearded man of slight build.

"He's tall and broad," Dydo said.

"But stooped a little by age now," Burns said. "The thing I always remember about Leon is the ring. A huge ring."

"He always lived in beautiful apartments," Dydo said. "Spacious, well-appointed, good layouts, expensive."

Burns expressed outrage over the e-mail Katz had sent me to sever our relations. Katz had written:

> To avoid the slightest misunderstanding, I must repeat once more what I spelled out on the phone during our first conversation, and add a word as well. . . . I am scrupulous in my determination not to have my material used by anyone before my own book . . . is out. It constitutes a labor of many years and much thought, and I am very much determined that its originality, both in facts still generally unknown concerning those early years, and in my own cogitations about them, are not made use of piecemeal in other authors' works, leaving my own to be regarded as revisiting already known material.

Katz went on to insist that I not quote from or draw on his dissertation. "That letter must have come as a shock to you," Burns said. "Like the closing of a gate. 'You may not write about me.

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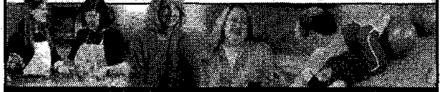

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You may not use my work.' 'What do you mean? What you've done is out there. It's published.' "

"So what is the answer about Katz? Or what is the question?" I asked, paraphrasing a famous line of Stein's, the words she was supposed to have uttered on her deathbed. On July 27, 1946, Stein was operated on for what proved to be inoperable stomach cancer and died before coming out of anesthesia. In "What Is Remembered," Toklas wrote of the "troubled, confused and very uncertain" afternoon of the surgery. "I sat next to her and she said to me early in the afternoon, What is the answer? I was silent. In that case, she said, what is the question?" However, in a letter to Van Vechten ten years earlier, Toklas had written:

> About Baby's last words. She said upon waking from a sleep—What is the question. And I didn't answer thinking she was not completely awakened. Then she said again—What is the question and before I could speak she went on—If there is no question then there is no answer.

Stein's biographers have naturally selected the superior "in that case what is the question?" version. Strong narratives win out over weak ones when no obstacle of factuality stands in their way. What Stein actually said remains unknown. That Toklas cited the lesser version in a letter of 1953 is suggestive but not conclusive.

"My question is," I said to Dydo, Burns, and Rice, "why are you so mad at Katz? Why does it matter to you that he hasn't published the annotated notebooks?"

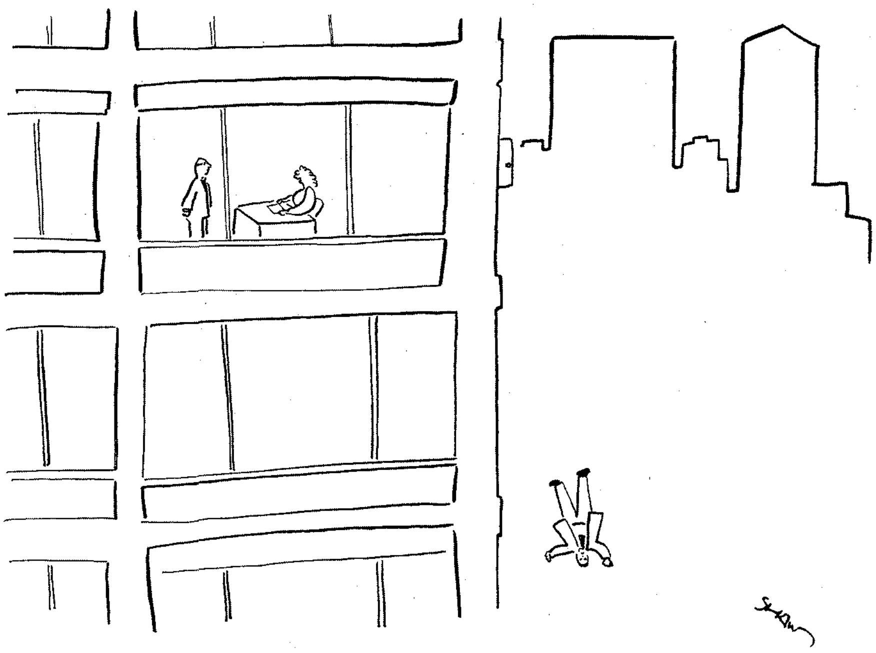
The answer came out slowly and hesitantly and was intertwined with "The Making of Americans" itself. The three scholars place Katz's unwritten book and Stein's unread masterpiece in a kind of tragic clasp. They believe that had Katz fulfilled his early promise as the preëminent authority on "The Making of Americans" Stein's novel could well be on college reading lists today. They feel that the surge of criticism necessary to propel a work into the academic canon would have followed upon the publication of the annotated notebooks. As it is, "The Making of Americans" remains an academic pariah, unstudied, unassigned, unread. Not all of this neglect can be laid at the feet of Katz, of course. The work itself, the scholars are aware, is innately rebarbative. And, unlike "Ulysses" and "The Waste Land" and other monuments of literary modernism, it offers few if any of the literary allusions to which academic criticism is drawn. For that reason, Katz's biographical findings glint with special significance.

"Leon was charged to write the book that would have created a path toward the novel," Burns said. "His interview with Alice was a last living link to its composition."

"He's left us hanging," Dydo said. "And we'd like to hit him over the head and open that head up and see what's in it—assuming there's something in it. We're not entirely sure anymore."

At the end of the meeting, Burns handed me a videotape he had once spoken of but had hitherto been unable to find. I played it that night, and there was Alice Toklas (impersonated by an actress who vaguely resembled her), lying in bed and soliloquizing about the "young man with the innocent face" who had come to interview her years before and in whom she had confided lurid secrets about her life with Gertrude Stein. The Alice impersonator lies back on her cushions, her fingers plucking at a white crocheted shawl, and recalls how "that very inquisitive young man" sat with her hour after hour as "the cold and the dark and the wet of Paris winter" crept into her apartment and "I told him all of that"; namely, about sex with Gertrude—"The smell and the taste of Baby . . . The filth we talked. Sweet, sweet flesh"—and about her jealous rage over the May Bookstaver affair. She recalls the satisfaction she took in her indiscretions. "Telling that boy, his pencil scribbling. It was detestable telling him such things. For him or for me? Not for me. Because I knew exactly what I was doing. The pleasure of looking into that stranger's face and betraying Gertrude as she had betrayed me." Alice goes on, "I told him how I destroyed our life together for a year and more than a year. . . . I told him how I screamed 'Damn you, Gertrude, damn you.' "

The author of the monologue is Leon Katz, who else. The Toklas piece, along with two other of Katz's monologues, was performed in Los Angeles in 2000, and filmed the same year. It offers few, if any, surprises to the Stein scholar. The secrets Toklas theatrically utters from her



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bed are the same ones that Katz more calmly retails in his dissertation. Katz also takes liberties that put into question the factuality of the monologue—and perhaps even of the dissertation. In the monologue, Toklas confesses a piece of crazy behavior to the young man that we know she did not actually confess to him. Katz only learned of this behavior after Toklas's death. In the late seventies, Dydo discovered that the manuscript of Stein's "Stanzas in Meditation" had been meddled with in such a way that every time the word "may" appeared it had been scratched out and the word "can" substituted. In a tour de force of imaginative scholarship, Dydo, building on Katz's footnote about the "passion" by which Toklas was seized when she found out about May Bookstaver, theorized that the obliteration of the word "may"—carried out by Stein under Toklas's direction—was Toklas's crazed expression of her wish to obliterate the person May.

No one has ever seen Katz's notes of his interview with Toklas. We have only his word that Toklas told him what he says she did. With one exception, there is no corroborating evidence of any of his citations of or quotations from the interview. The exception, paradoxically, is Dydo's discovery of the may / can business. If Katz's anachronistic inclusion of it in his monologue raises questions about his dissertation, the discovery itself puts them to rest: the documentary evidence of Toklas's rage corroborates Katz's account of what the rage was about.

In a final chapter of the dissertation, Katz wonderfully expresses his sense of the importance for Stein of writing "The Making of Americans." "After the novel was finished, the portentous subject, the effort to achieve the grand manner, even the terms of formal intellectual discourse are all discarded, and her writing settles into a life-long, smiling, personal pageantry of the nearby and the trivial," he writes. "Germinating out of nine years of labor on a novel that passed beyond the scope and limits of the novel's form, from the settled center of her matured vision, out of the 'flattening' of the hierarchies of thought and feeling that her intensity of vision finally achieved, her unique art subsequently emerged as an endlessly full hymn of pleasure in the actual, a nonselective tribute to the uniform splendors of existence." Katz himself, after his years of intense engagement with the forces by which Stein's anti-novel was shaped, may, too, have felt the sense of a feat pulled off and the urge to move on. Dydo, Burns, and Rice's regret over Katz's defection from the world of Stein scholarship may be nothing compared with Katz's relief in being free of its difficulties and uncertainties. ♦

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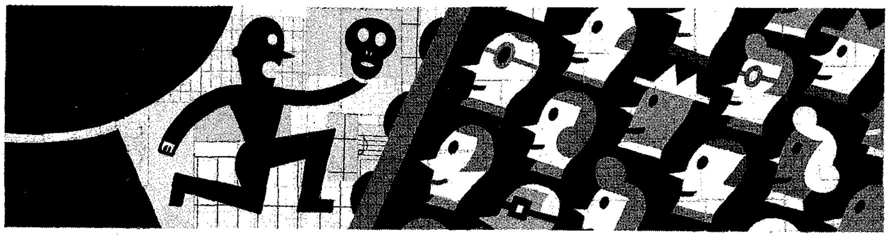


A CRITIC AT LARGE

METROPOLITAN

William Dean Howells and the novel of New York.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

Almost the first thing that every essay about the nineteenth-century American novelist William Dean Howells announces is that no one writes essays about William Dean Howells anymore; his eclipse is his identity. Yet in every decade since his death, in 1920, he has found strong advocates—and, although one might think that he needs to be argued for because he is distant from us, each new Howells has oddly resembled the critic who offers him. Howells is somehow both the road not taken and the street where we live.

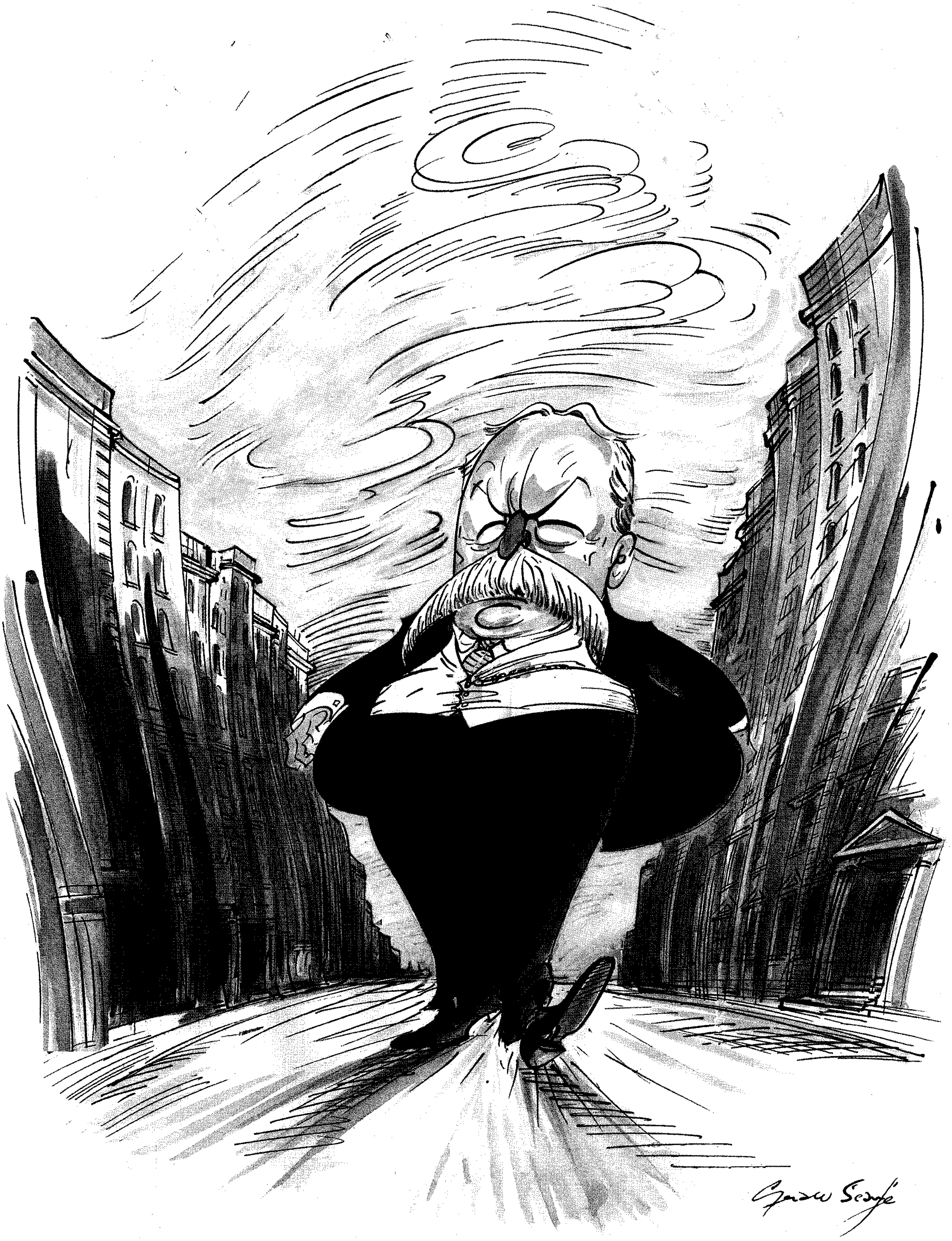
For the critic and historian Van Wyck Brooks, writing in the nineteen-thirties, Howells was a wise but essentially sunny New England patriot, who had absorbed enough European culture to be serious without absorbing so much as to be cynical, the model of a modernized but not corrupted American author. For Alfred Kazin, in the forties, Howells was a democratic poet, an urban rhapsodist, a realist with a singing heart. For Lionel Trilling, writing in the fifties, Howells was a trembling modern liberal, with a strong social conscience but a fastidious distaste for democratic ecstasies, a writer who, like Trilling, grasped the disappearance of tragedy in bourgeois society, yet lamented its loss. For John Updike, in the eighties, Howells was the original and still unvanquished prophet of the "anti-novel"—the American novelist who recognized the middling nature of American society, and who, rejecting both romantic hysteria and a too inward-turning formalism, made all that could be made of the commonplace life of the American middle classes. Since the fate of most writers is oblivion, as the fate of most species is extinction, this is not at all a bad haul.

Now, in the first full-force scholarly biography in decades—"William Dean Howells: A Writer's Life" (California; $34.95), by Susan Goodman and Carl Dawson—we have Howells more or less whole and more or less straight. Goodman and Dawson are professors at the University of Delaware, and though their biography, respectful and even reverent, is easily the best that Howells has received, it seems unlikely to alter his eclipse. One actually feels a little sorry that *something*—a homoerotic scandal à la Eakins, an incident of cross-dressing, a moment of possible incest, a spanking given or received—hasn't come up to help his cause. A good, gentle, conscientious Howells remains admirable but not very vital. There *are* dark shadows and grief in his life, particularly the illness and death of his beloved daughter, Winifred, who languished for years, suffering from one of those nameless Alice James-type diseases. But Winifred's illness remains decently unsensationalized in the new book, and the possibility—which more Freudian, or merely Chekhovian, biographers might have entertained—that her illness was some kind of protest against the constant and exhausting public praise of her father's wholesomeness and rectitude is left politely unconsidered.

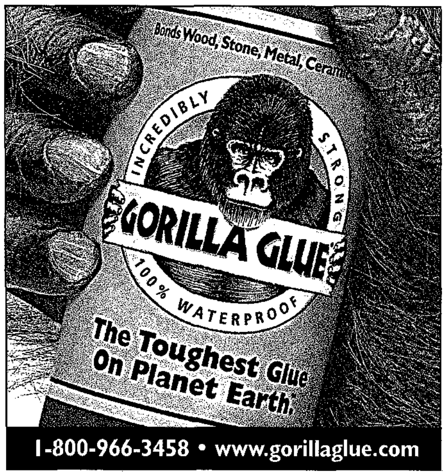
So Howells remains without a wound to make him draw his bow, and a woundless writer feels too remote from us to be much loved. What did Howells lust for, what songs made him smile, what, as they say in Hollywood script conferences, did he *want*? "To be a leading man of letters" is, really, no one's answer to that question. The human questions seem, for so humane a writer, still unanswered. What his new biographers do, superbly, is to situate Howells in the places where he found himself. It turns out that Howells's is a tale of four cities: Columbus, Ohio, where he came of age, and which in his mind always represented virtue; Boston, which was his home during his salad days, and which represented intellect; Venice, which represented old Europe and sex. And then New York, which represented—well, what New York represented for Howells is a deep question. Answering it might give us a Howells for these nervous noughts: a poet of middle-class precariousness, of terrorist threats and immigrant renewals, of tarnished gilded ages and plutocratic triumph and liberal embattlement. Howells was the first writer to intuit that the circumstances of New York City—its density, its devotion to commerce and to the commercial laws of chance and hazard and hope—demanded a new way of writing, outside the model even of the radical realist, Zolaesque novel. His was the first "delirious" New York in American prose, and he gives us still something of the sound and taste of our own delirium.

Howells, though he wasn't born in a log cabin, spent part of his Ohio childhood in one. "We disputed about authors among ourselves," Howells once recounted of his backwoods boyhood, in the eighteen-forties. "The village wits . . . liked to stand with their backs to our stove and challenge opinion concerning Holmes and Poe, Irving and Macaulay, Pope and Byron, Dickens and Shakespeare." Howells's father was a would-be everything—evangelist, inventor, businessman, frontier entrepreneur. But mostly he was a newspaperman, both high-minded publisher and typesetting printer, who wandered through Ohio, editing one paper after another, before setting up shop in Columbus in 1851, when William was fourteen. He gave his son a sense of the centrality of writing to existence, and an even keener sense that a writer was, first of all, a small (and usually failing) businessman like any other. When, years later, William became the American consul in

GERALD SCARFE


Gerald Scarfe

Howells saw that New York's devotion to the commercial laws of chance and hazard demanded a new way of writing.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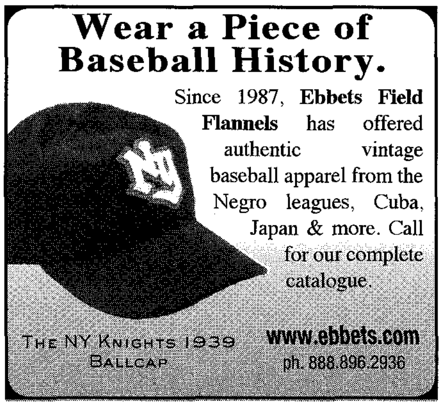
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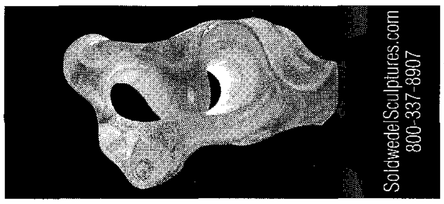

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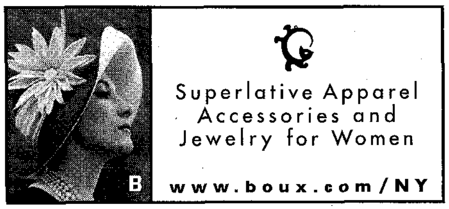
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Venice, the first thing his father did was to try and take advantage of his son's position to sell a new kind of oar to the gondoliers. (They weren't interested.)

The young Howells wanted to be a poet, and when he was twenty-two got a poem accepted by *The Atlantic Monthly*. He went to Boston, with touching self-importance, to meet the editor who had made this smart decision, and managed, in a couple of days, to go right to the top—befriended by Holmes the elder and James Russell Lowell. There was a big space between the Western frontier and the literary capital, but not a lot of space between the bottom of the ladder and the top once you got there.

In those days as in these, there were a few girls you could woo on the basis of having sold a piece to a famous magazine. Back home in Columbus, Howells's success in Boston opened the door, and then the heart, of a beautiful young girl named Elinor Mead. Elinor, a smart New England émigrée, could hardly believe that anyone in Columbus had had something published in *The Atlantic*. Theirs was an instant attraction; her first impression was that he was a "tasty dresser," and he would have known that she was the niece of John Noyes, the founder of the free-love (i.e., free sex) community of Oneida—the ever-so-slightly-estranged niece, but still the niece.

Looking for a way to make some money, the young Howells got a job writing the campaign biography of an Illinois lawyer named Abraham Lincoln who was running for President. He hadn't met Lincoln, and he wasn't supporting him, anyway—his candidate was Salmon P. Chase, the abolitionist senator from Ohio. When Lincoln won, Howells had a favor to call in, and, in the spring of 1861, Howells, fervent abolitionist though he was, tried to get a consulate posting abroad, preferably in Germany. (He loved Goethe, and had learned German.) He wanted Munich, would have settled for Vienna, and ended up with Venice.

Venice, being under Austrian domination, had no foreign policy of its own; the consulate was mostly a lost-luggage-and-passport kind of job. But the consolation prize worked out perfectly for Howells, and made him as a writer. He fell in love with Venice, for all its melancholy—real rather than rote then, when Venice was still peopled by Venetians, and only fifty years from having been an independent power—and the resonant comic space between his own background as a Protestant, plainspoken American and the Catholic-pagan, damp-rot world of Venice gave him a great subject.

He took the measure of the place, found somewhere to live—in a palazzo that, he insisted later, was not at all palatial—and then sent for Elinor. He married her in Paris, and they went on to Venice, where they quickly had a child. It's evident that, though she later became a bit of a Mrs. Bennet, Elinor was then a lust object for him. Howells is the great singer of married sexual love—it is an undercurrent in nearly all his novels, keeps his couples humming even as they squabble—and even in the hands of his new biographers he gets too little credit for it. (The slightest quiver in the null set of James's sex life launches whole books, but the sex life of a man both lustful and uxorious is regarded as unworthy of notice.)

Howells becomes a different writer in Venice, achieving a note of happy imperturbability, at once avid and serene, that remained for a long time the desired style of American descriptive writing. He had a naturalness as distinctive as Hemingway's or Twain's, though less studied. "I trust the reader will not disdain the lowly-minded muse that sings this mild domestic lay," he writes in his chronicle "Venetian Life." "I was resolved in writing this book to tell what I had found most books of travel very slow to tell,—as much as possible of the everyday life of a people." Howells helped invent a kind of American prose that was not so much plain writing as easy writing—not easy to write (nothing is) but easy to read, and giving an instant note of common sense based on common pleasure.

"Venetian Life," when it was published, in 1866, was a huge hit. Howells had just settled in New York as an editor at the nascent *Nation* (the *Times* wouldn't match his salary) when he was called back to Boston to become the assistant editor of *The Atlantic*, then at the height of its reputation. Within a few months, he had become its chief book critic, and within five years its editor, which he remained until 1881.

Howells, at *The Atlantic*, had the best record for picking talent of anyone in Boston until Red Auerbach. Twain and James were the two most significant passions—

and if they seem like anyone's first-round picks now, at the time one was regarded as a rustic Dave Barry, and the other as hopelessly dry and arty. But the list stretches on and on. When Emily Dickinson's posthumous collection appeared, he immediately grasped its stature, seeing her not just as an oddball spinster-sibyl but as a central American voice: her poems are as "characteristic of our life as our business enterprise, our political turmoil, our demagogism, our millionairism. Listen!" He saw the point of Stephen Crane's compressions and became his patron. His judgments of European literature were just as smart. He loved Balzac but recognized that Gogol was a better writer, and of all the English novelists rated Jane Austen and Trollope highest—a brave judgment in those Dickens-and-Thackeray years.

It was during this time, as well, that he wrote the New England novels that made his reputation, most notably "The Rise of Silas Lapham" and "A Modern Instance," mastering a realism at once wry and thoughtful, but perhaps hampered by politeness. (Malice in prose is like the tannins in red wine: they can't guarantee its quality, but they do assure its longevity—Waugh has lasted while Wells has not.) But what is surprising is that, as his new biographers make clear for the first time, Howells's editorship of *The Atlantic* was by commercial standards a failure. He drove the circulation right down, in part because *The Atlantic* was too pinky-in-the-air to compete with the new illustrated papers coming out of New York—the old media–new media confrontation of that day.

It was after this that Howells, in the late eighteen-eighties, decided to pack up and move to New York City, a clear declaration that the primacy of one cultural capital had passed and another's had begun. Howells's motives were complicated. No doubt there was the search, constant to any writer, to make more money in a livelier place. But there seems also to have been the conviction that New York had become the capital of the real America, that it had in a way *become* America.

Though the Howellses never quite settled in New York—they arrived, rented a place, left again for Cambridge, returned, then went back, and then returned—they seemed to have thought that never quite settling was part of the New York condition. They lived uptown, briefly downtown, moved several more times, and made a final home on West Fifty-seventh Street. In his first thirteen years there, Howells produced three exceptional novels—"A Hazard of New Fortunes" (1890), "The World of Chance" (1893), and "Letters Home" (1903)—that depict a city of chance, fortune, disorder, chaos. It is a place where the essential principle of commerce and capitalism made everything grotesque, but where beauty somehow crept in—"ugly in every particular, and picturesque on the whole," as he put it. These books are classic nineteenth-century ambition novels of the kind that no one seems to write any longer: young man comes to

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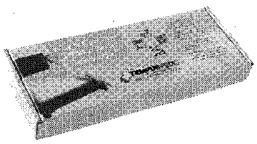

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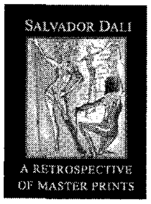

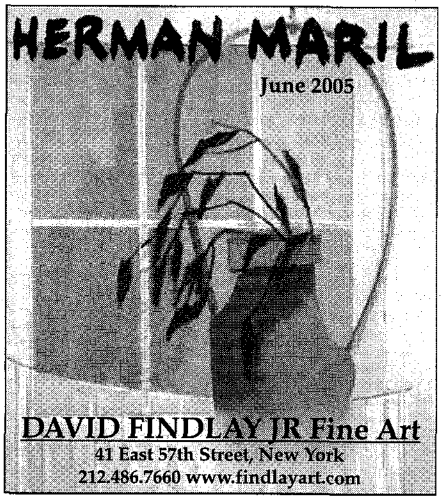
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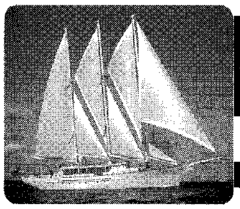
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The New York novels share a tone, a voice—a special mixture of reporting and rhapsodic metropolitan poetry—that, though an extension of the tone of serene amusement Howells discovered in Venice, is in crucial ways unsettled, and more unsettling. The city is hymned and then shunned, seen as a force almost outside nature, a centrifuge of chance and hazard. New York shakes the newcomer out of his socks, and offers in return only a "dreadful solidarity," as the old idealist Otis writes in "Letters Home"—a solidarity of small, self-made groups clinging like wrecked passengers to a life raft. Where in Wharton or James the continuity of old European values and families is still important, for Howells "the Four Hundred" are an irrelevance, important only to themselves. In Howells's New York, every four is a four hundred, and each believes itself to be at the center.

What is most memorable in the books is this metropolitan tone. "I want to write the Epic of New York, and I am going to," the young, lovesick hero of "Letters Home" writes to a pal in his small Midwestern home town, and he goes on:

> I would like to walk you down Twenty-third Street, between Fifth and Sixth avenues, and wake you up to the fact that you have got a country. Only you would think you were dreaming, and it *is* a dream. What impresses me most is the gratis exhibition that goes on all the time, the continuous performance of the streets that you could not get for money any where else, and that here is free to the poorest. In fact, it is *for* the poor. There is one window on Fourteenth street where the sidewalk is a solid mass of humanity from morning till night, entranced by the fairy scene inside; and most of the spectators look as if they had not been to breakfast or dinner, and were not going to supper. But they are enraptured; and that is the great secret of New York; she takes you out of yourself; she annihilates you and disperses you, and you might starve to death here without feeling hungry, for your mind wouldn't be on it.

The overlap of fantasy and hard fact in writing about New York is distinctively Howellsian: you have a country, and it is a dream. Early in "The World of Chance," the writer hero, Ray, sees the city for the first time, "with a sense of the beauty struggling through the grotesqueness of the huge panorama, and evoking itself somehow from the grossest details":

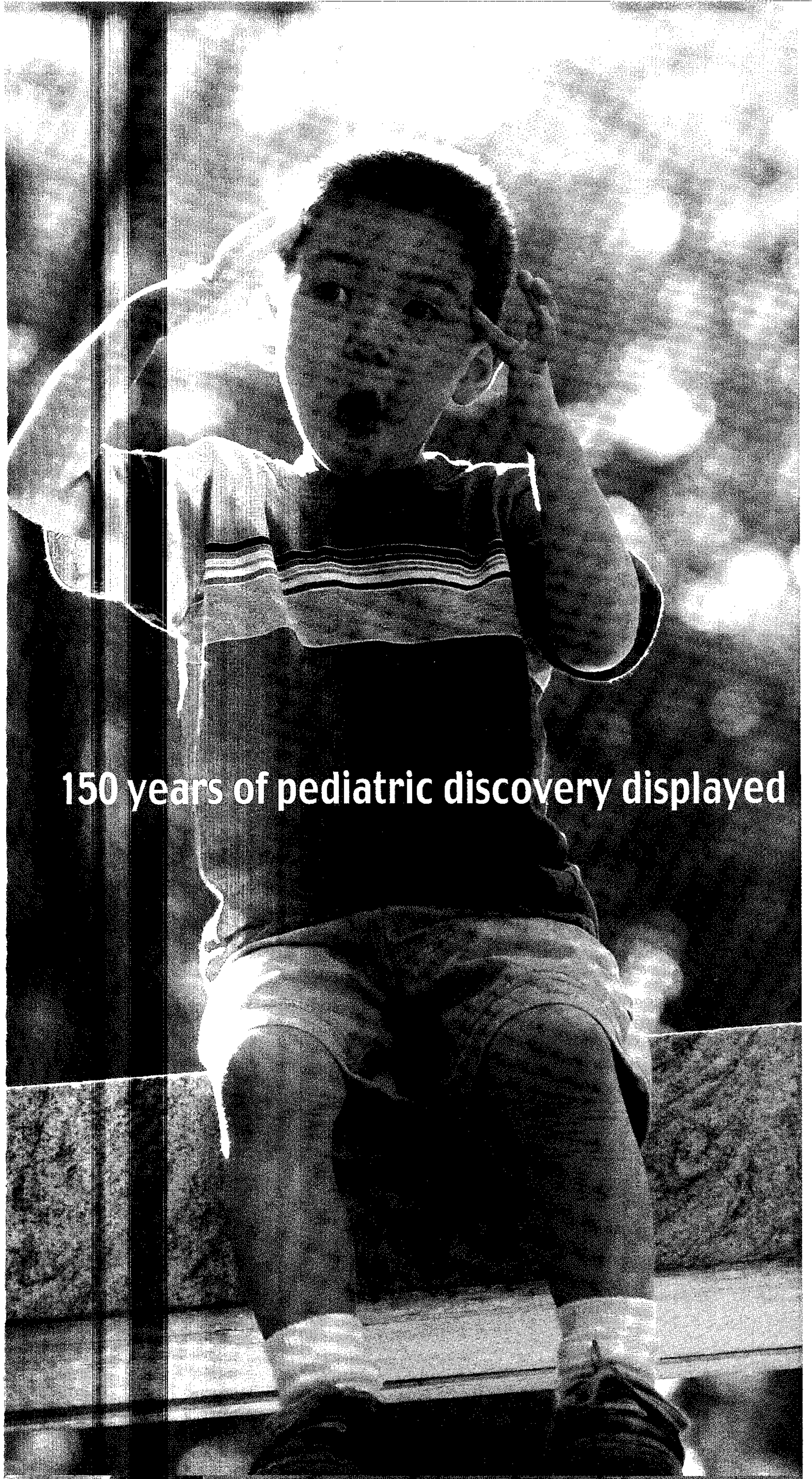
> The ferry-boats coming and going; the great barges with freight trains in sections in them; the canal-boats in tow of the river steamers; the shabby sloops slouching by with their sails half-filled by the flagging breeze; the ships lying at anchor in the stream, and wooding the shore with their masts, which the coastwise steamboats stared out of like fantastic villas, all window-shutters and wheel-houses; the mean, ugly fronts and roofs of the buildings beyond, and hulking high overhead in the further distance in vast bulks and clumsy towers, the masses of those ten-storied edifices which are the necessity of commerce and the despair of art, all helped to compose the brutal and stupid body of the thing, whose soul was collectively expressed in an incredible picturesqueness. Ray saw nothing amiss in it. This agglomeration of warring forms, feebly typifying the ugliness of the warring interests within them, did not repulse him. He was not afraid. He took a new grip of the traveling-bag where he had his manuscript, so that he should not be parted from it for a moment till it went into some publisher's keeping.

The play of domestic particulars and unashamed hyperbole gives these passages their life: New York is a spectacle but it is unrecorded, even by painters, and perhaps unrecordable; you are left inarticulate before it. It is magical in a way, but it also awaits a magician; it is organized lifelessness full of a strange semblance of life. New York is stupid and brutal, and it is incredibly picturesque.

This might be no more than a mass of Walter Winchell-style clichés—New York is a fancy lady but she'll turn on ya, etc.—if not for the charm of the particulars evoked (that lovely use of "wooding," or, later, the "train that found and lost itself a thousand times in the flare and tremor"), the play of opposites, and the odd lack of conventional drama. In all these novels, the hero's first impression is not adjusted by experience, leaving him sadder but wiser; it *is* the experience, an unchanging truth to which he must adjust. In this respect, Howells's New York writing—the evoked impression of the Brooklyn Bridge or the elevated train—is closer to Hart Crane's poetry than to Edith Wharton's prose. The passing show is the deep point.

Of the three novels, "Hazard" is by far the best known, on the whole the most successful, and the only one still in print.

Paxton Wentzell, 3, vaccine recipient,
car safety seat passenger, healthy little boy



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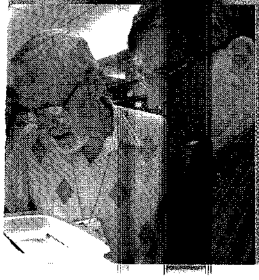

Children's Hospital researcher H. Fred Clark, D.V.M., Ph.D. (left), shown with co-investigator Paul Offit, M.D., chief of Infectious Diseases, has developed a vaccine for rotavirus, the single largest infectious disease killer of infants and young children in the world.

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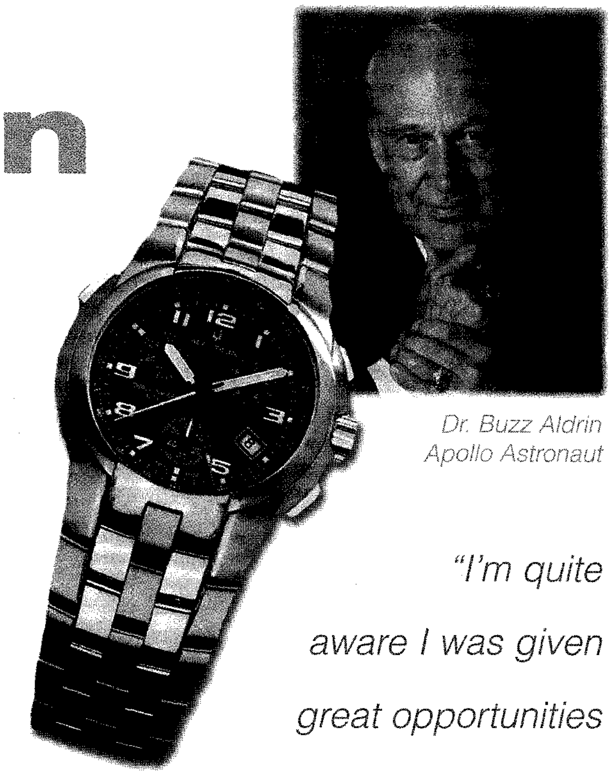

Dr. Buzz Aldrin
Apollo Astronaut

Dr. Buzz Aldrin's favorite ties are hand-painted in various colors and feature the moon and stars. He wears them often, he says, "as an indication of my past, the future other people look forward to, and because I think the stars inspire us all."

Coming this fall, he – as well as his admirers – will have another accessory that celebrates his luminous accomplishments: The Eagle Pilot's Watch by Accutron, which will feature the famous astronaut's signature on the caseback.

Bulova Corporation created the watch to commemorate both the hundredth anniversary of aviation and the thirty-fifth anniversary of Apollo 11's moon landing, when Aldrin became one of the first two men to walk atop the dust of the lunar surface.

Aldrin used Bulova's Accutron technology through much of his career in space – placing an Accutron timer for crucial data transmissions in the Sea of Tranquility during his moonwalk. Four years ago he became a spokesperson for the Accutron line.

The watch is an embodiment of style and adventure, much like the man it honors. Aldrin has had an intrepid spirit for as far back as he can remember, and it led him to West Point, where he graduated with honors, going on to become a U.S. Air Force fighter pilot. Next came combat in Korea, where he flew Sabre Jets in 66 combat missions. After returning to the States, he headed to M.I.T., where he received a doctorate in astronautics. His career with NASA began in 1963, and three years later, as a crew member of the Gemini 12 mission, he took his first space walk. He floated outside the craft for about five hours, thus taking nearly two trips around the world.

Thirty-five years after his moonwalk, Aldrin hasn't stopped seeking the rush of an exciting quest. The writer, businessman, and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom still enjoys physically demanding sports like scuba diving and snow skiing. And, in September he became one of the first to fly aboard a commercial plane that darts up and down like a roller coaster to create zero gravity, allowing its handful of participants to experience weightlessness. "It's a real eye-opening and exhilarating experience," he says. As a vocal proponent of space tourism, he hopes others can experience even greater adventures in the future.

> *"I'm quite aware I was given great opportunities throughout my life to serve my country"*

With such a zest for life, is it any wonder Aldrin prefers to wear colors? (One exception: spacesuits, which are white to reflect sunlight.) The national hero is particularly fond of blue. "It signifies the skies and outward reaching of humanity," he says, adding, "and it also matches my eyes."

The astronaut himself has extended his talents in fascinating and selfless ways, and Accutron celebrates his achievements with its Eagle Pilot's Watch this fall. Aldrin likes the timepiece because it is stylishly sophisticated yet ideal for the active outdoor adventurer. With great modesty he expresses gratitude for an enviable career. "I'm quite aware I was given great opportunities throughout my life to serve my country," he says.

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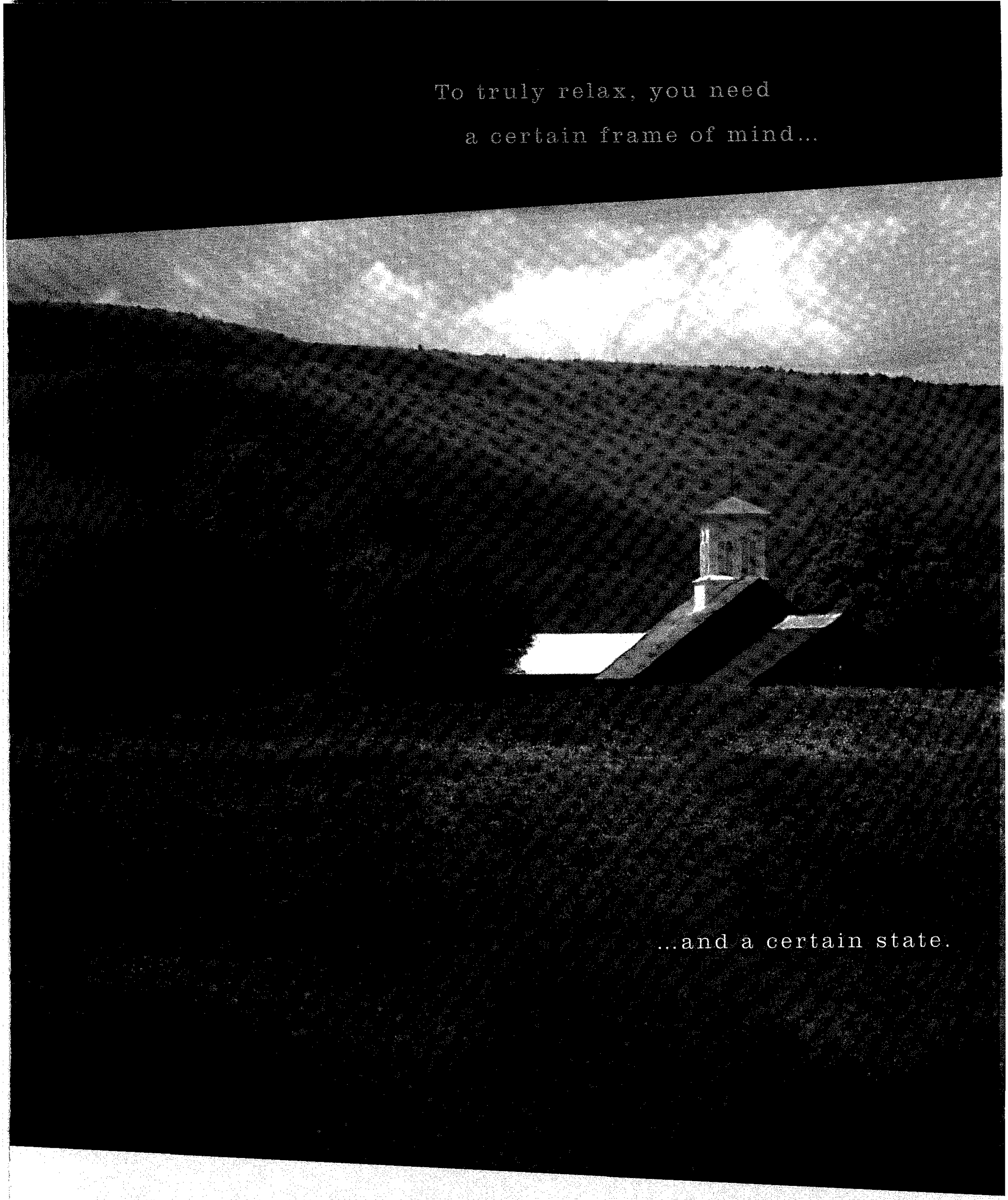
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Although things vanish, are what mark our vanishing,
we still hold on to them—ballast against the updraft
of oblivion—as I hold on to this umbrella in a world of rain,

of heavy wet greens and grays dissolving into a new
atmosphere, a sort of underwater dulled electric glow
off everything, the air itself drowning in it, breath

thickening, growing mold. Yesterday I felt the smell
of grass greeting me as across a great distance, trying
to tell me some good thing in an underglaze of memory,

some forgotten summer trying to speak its piece. It is
the way of things and it never stops, never calls a halt—
this knocking and dismantling, this uprooting, cutting out

and digging down, so tall oaks and honey locusts are
laid low and drop to earth like felled cattle, shaking
the ground we've taken a stand on as if it were a steady

establishment, a rock of ages to outface ruin itself, not
the provisional slippery dissolving dissolute thing it is—
which we have against all the evidence set our hearts on.

—*Eamon Grennan*

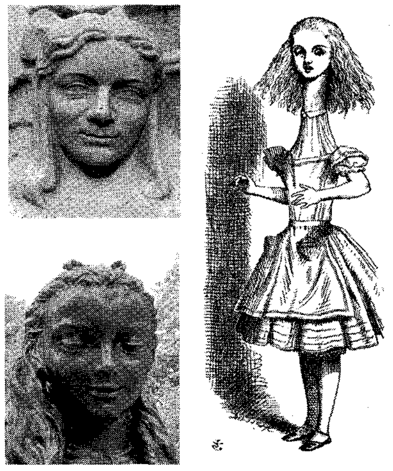
Its great subject, however, is easy to miss: the permanent precariousness of the middle classes in New York. Those, more than the largely faceless immigrants and proletariat with whom Howells sympathizes but whom he hardly knows, are the focus of pathos. Even the upper middle classes in America are in more precarious shape than the plutocrats want them to know; in New York, they come closest to knowing. It is made plain for them by, among other things, the miseries of apartment hunting and holding: you are what you have, and you will not have a single square inch, or a single shaft of light, more than you can afford.

Yet the other novels have their odd modernity, too. The conversations in "The World of Chance" about the threat of large stores to small books happened this morning, and the way in which the hero insinuates himself as an author before actually writing anything is slyly done, and echoes Howells's theme that in New York the sign comes first and the thing signed for second. (In Henry James, the sigh comes first and the thing sighed for second.) Ray's novel, "A Modern Romeo," is obviously very, very bad—and Howells lets us know this without taking sides against his hero—yet we feel for his despair. His emotions at the manuscript's rejections, and his surprising lack of emotion at its eventual acceptance, and improbable success, are deeply understood. (Ray's novel succeeds because of one slightly tendentious and off-the-point rave review, and Ray both glories in it and feels guilty about it.)

This submission to hazard and chance as the only deities produces, at the novel's end, a fatalism that strangely touches the edge of nihilism. Ray gets on a train to go back to his home town, to take a victory lap after his New York triumph:

> He began to wonder if life had not all been a chance with him. Nothing, not even the success of his book, in the light he now looked at it in, was the result of reasoned cause. That success had happened; it had not followed; and he didn't deserve any praise for what had merely happened. If this apparent fatality were confined to the economic world alone, he would have been willing to censure civilization, and take his chance dumbly, blindly, with the rest. He had not found it so. On the contrary, he had found the same caprice, the same rule of mere causality, in the world which we suppose to be ordered by law—the world of thinking, the world of feeling.

What happens is what happens, and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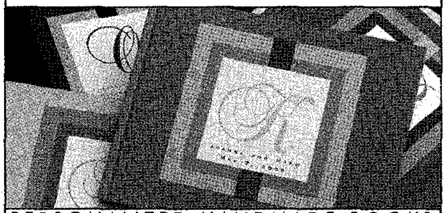
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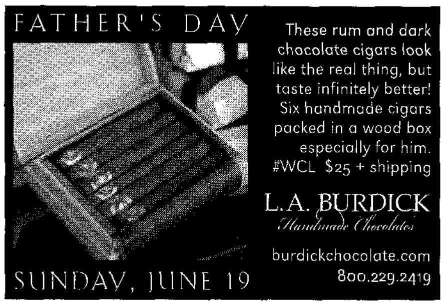

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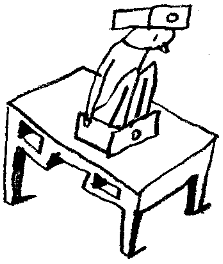
though we console ourselves with the thought that there might be a Providence lurking someplace, we know that it is a secondhand idea, and that in the end there is just oblivion. This increasing sense of the randomness of social order—the belief that how we do is determined largely by a throw of the dice—is inextricable from Howells's growing political radicalism in those years. Goodman and Dawson take great trouble to make us understand the extent and, in his own time, the significance of Howells's transformation into a "practicing radical" in the eighteen-eighties and after. He was one of the very few writers to speak against the execution of the unjustly convicted Haymarket anarchists. "It blackens my life," he wrote. "I feel the horror and the shame of the crime which the law is about to commit against justice"—this at a time when the overwhelming majority of Americans thought of the anarchists exactly as they think of terrorists now, as aliens with large-scale massacre on their minds. (And not without reason: the anarchist leader Johann Most, who spent time in New York, had published a pamphlet called "Revolutionary War Science: A Little Handbook of Instruction in the Use and Preparation of Nitroglycerin, Dynamite, etc.," which openly advocated the extermination of the middle classes.) Howells, like Twain, then watched with disbelief as the Spanish American war, with a toxic cocktail of deliberate manipulation (he knew both Pulitzer and Hearst, and rated them correctly), imperial appetite, and a kind of primitive tribalism, dishonored the country he loved and thought he knew.

Howells, despite his reputation for gentle domesticity, became a target for the reactionary press; he eventually had to endure his old acquaintance Teddy Roosevelt's blaming him for having "a heavy part in the burden of responsibility" for McKinley's assassination. Yet Howells's radicalism was never utopian; he found Tolstoy naïve. It was really no more than liberalism pressed by circumstances to the edge of despair. Once we have concluded that we live in a world governed by chance and hazard, we can react either by extending our circle of compassion to include people who have been less lucky than we are or by attempting to protect ourselves against the next roll of the dice by enclosing ourselves in a fortress of fear. Under the stress of fear, Howells believed, a society of commercial chance will panic; the American writer's role is not just to speak truth to power but to speak reason to hysteria. A kind of passionate liberal meliorism is tied, for Howells, to a sense of individual responsibility that is nearly existential in its urgency. Although in his novels we are given the little comfort that all this chance and hazard may be part of a larger order, it is a Jamesian—William Jamesian—comfort: whatever sense you can give it is, in the end, all yours to give.



One wonders, too, if the image of Fortune on a wheel, which comes again and again in these three books, doesn't hark back to the novelist's Venetian life. Fortuna, of course, is the statue that turns at the end of the Dogana, and this sense of New York as the city of chance—lucky chances, missed chances, odd chances, and forlornly chased chances—is so dominant in the New York novels that it carries a kind of historical argument: if for Howells Boston is a lesser London, New York is the second Venice, Venice as it really was—not a spiritual but a commercial city. Like Venice before it, New York is the city that spins.

Howells's New York novels don't completely work. His insight is also his incapacity. The mountain-climbing, metropolitan novel of ambition has never really come to life here because there are too many mountains. For the Balzacian-Dickensian city novel, there has to be a perspective, a hierarchy of near and far, large and small; in its absence all one has is a pattern of behavior, and in New York, as Howells grasped, each pattern thinks that it is *the* pattern. (People at CBGB in the seventies were convinced that it was all happening to them, and so were the people at Studio 54.) All the would-be novelist can do is trust to luck, take the nearest pattern, and hope that it resembles someone else's. Writers in New York are like the mice in a New York apartment; we own the place, there are so many of us, but we cannot possess it. (And the most we can hope for is to become like the rats, unignorable and horrible.)

To sing New York demands the soul

of a novelist, but perhaps only his soul. Howells's tone has been left, on the whole, to journalists and essayists, from Joseph Mitchell to Jimmy Breslin—each in his own way following an essential intuition that the real subject of the city is commercial destruction, that it has no smooth continuous past, and that its monuments and streets and restaurants are as fugitive as the years. Howells's own best "fact" writing about New York, the many essays that, through the first two decades of the twentieth century, he wrote for the ill-named "Easy Chair" column in *Harper's*, are, as Goodman and Dawson rightly say, an ur-source of much New York writing, including the old "Talk of the Town" tone in this magazine, and ought to be collected and reprinted.

Howells's last years make for sad reading, as perhaps all last years must. Winnie died in 1889, after a horrendous course of quack treatment for what remained a baffling illness, and Elinor died in 1910, knocked out by morphine the doctors gave her for an equally indecipherable malaise. "Cambridge is a wonder of leaves and grass," Howells wrote, when both mother and daughter were buried there—"but with graves under them everywhere."

Howells, like every good Ohioan, wanted a home, a house, and eventually found one he loved, at Kittery Point, in Maine. But where less vigilant writers would have retired there and waited for the pilgrims, Howells kept coming home to New York. Even when people deferred to him as a power, the Grand Old Man of American letters, he went right on speaking truth. On his seventy-fifth birthday, the City of New York asked him for a statement to be read out loud at every public school in the city. What could they have been expecting? Howells said simply, with the memory of the Spanish-American War and the lies that led to it, "While I would wish you to love America most because it is your home, I would have you love the whole world and think of all the people in it as your countrymen. . . . When our country is wrong she is worse than other countries when they are wrong, for she has more light than other countries, and we somehow ought to make her feel that we are sorry and ashamed for her."

More light! Goethe's famous deathbed invocation, pressed back into service so that the children of P.S. 6 could begin to sense why Americans have a responsibility to set a decent example—the quiet quotation is typical of Howells's subtlety and of his sheer heroic persistence as a writer determined to use all the resources of a poetic imagination to put American life into the light of common experience. He chose to die as a New Yorker, passing away on Fifty-seventh Street, not far from Carnegie Hall, just as the new spree years were beginning. Howells's ashes are, as he wanted, in sad and proper Cambridge where they belong, alongside Elinor and Winnie. But his ghost is right around the corner. ♦

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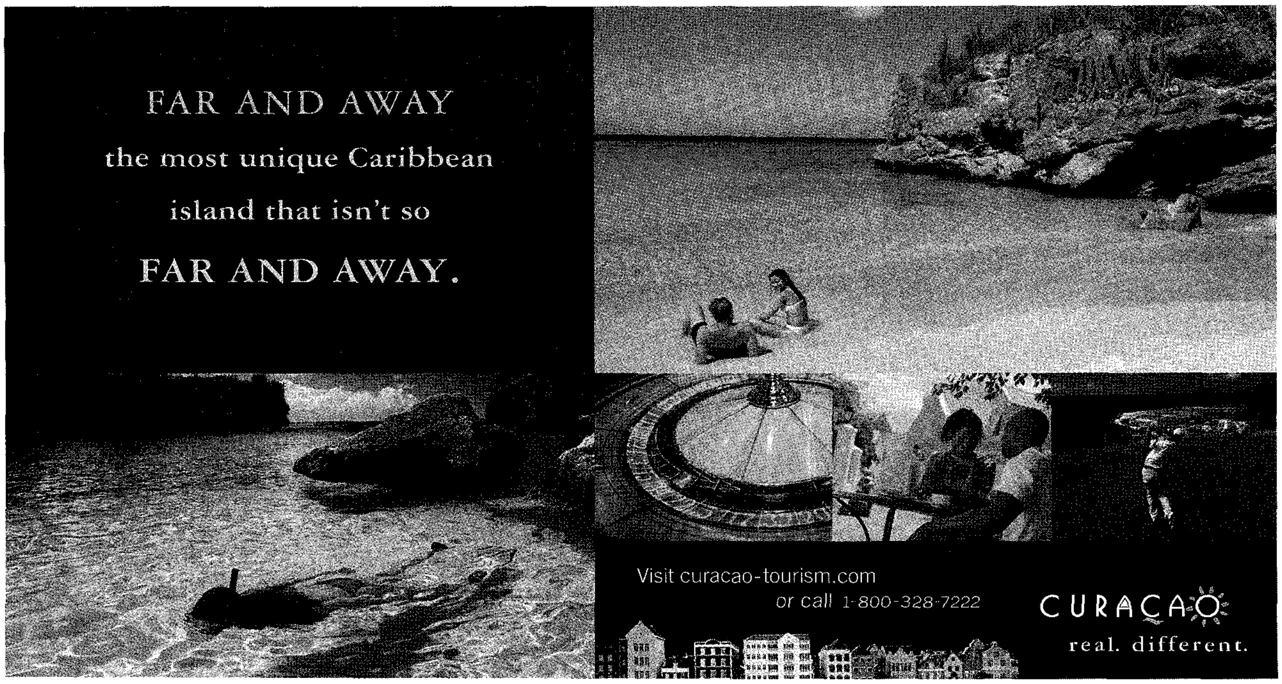

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BOOKS

THE GREAT GAME GONE

The post-Cold War spy novel.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

The spy thriller still pines for the Soviet Union. No post-Iron Curtain intrigue, no replay of the British Empire's Great Game in Afghanistan or its intrusions into the Middle East, no elaborate "security measures," no double-double cross in the murk of C.I.A.-F.B.I. rivalry can match, for heart-stoppingly high geopolitical stakes, the good old days when, in terms of John le Carré's fiction, M.I.6's Smiley matched wits with the K.G.B.'s Karla on the global chessboard. There was an intelligibility if not a friendly intimacy in the old contest, one between two large, idealistic, rough-mannered nations seeking to maintain their spheres of influence short of tripping nuclear war. As one hardened undercover functionary cozily tells another in Robert Littell's new book, "Legends: A Novel of Dissimulation" (Overlook; $25.95), "We all came of age in the cold war. We all fought the good fight. I'm sure we can work something out." The so-called war on terror has no such surety; "working out" is just what the other side, or sides, doesn't want. Littell conscientiously covers the new ground—the post-Soviet Russia of the oligarchs; the potential for financial shenanigans opened up by worldwide computerization; the stagnant antipathy between Israel and its neighbors; Bosnia; Chechnya; and (news to me) an international smugglers' cove where the borders of Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina meet and whores dance sleepily in one another's arms—but he remains most excited by, and most at home with, occupants of the old U.S.S.R. as they strike up fresh relations with capitalism and the C.I.A.

Littell, a former *Newsweek* reporter now resident in France, began his career as a fictional spymaster with "The Defection of A. J. Lewinter: A Novel of Duplicity" (1973), a deft and lighthearted performance on the edge of parody, and capped it, a dozen books later, with the best-selling magnum opus "The Company: A Novel of the C.I.A." (2002), a nostalgic recapitulation, in nearly nine hundred pages, of the Cold War intelligence marathon from 1950 to 1995. Littell is not the only author to scent an epic here; Norman Mailer's giant, possibly ongoing saga "Harlot's Ghost" deals also with this secretive struggle and evokes the striking historical figure of gaunt, erudite James Jesus Angleton, for some twenty years the head of C.I.A. counterintelligence. "Legends," though falling short of Tolstoyan, or Maileresque, amplitude, does not scant, expertly roaming the continents and offering a psychological puzzle to go with all the deception and violence.

Robert Littell

PAUL HAMLYN

Martin Odum, to give the novel's confusing hero his most often used name, is an ex-C.I.A. operative who has, he feels, lost his real identity in the shuffle of "legends"—false identities, with carefully worked-out histories and trade skills, assumed for particular episodes of espionage. Odum has paid a personal price for doing his devious patriotic duty:

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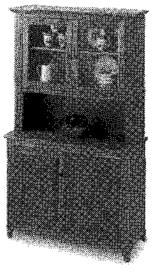

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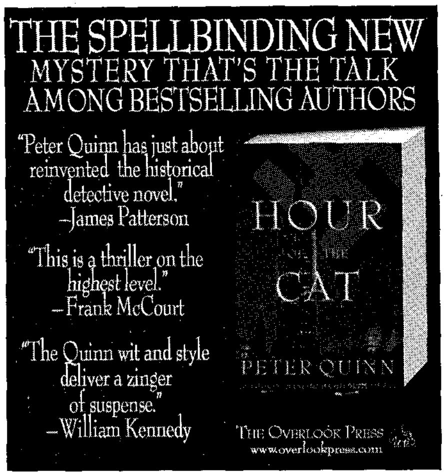
he suffers from migraine headaches; his occasional lover finds her side of their relationship "like sleepwalking through a string of one-night stands that were physically satisfying but emotionally frustrating"; he plans to spend the rest of his life, he confesses to her, "boring himself to death." The C.I.A. retired him after his psychoanalysis at the taxpayers' expense was abruptly terminated. His diagnosis was MPD, multiple-personality disorder. Along with his well-remembered roles of Dante Pippen, an I.R.A. dynamiter training Hezbollah jihadists in Lebanon, and Lincoln Dittman, a Civil War buff doubling as an arms dealer in Brazil, there are hints of a legend, an alter ego, beyond his memory's reach. These impersonations having served their dangerous purpose, and Odum having outlived his usefulness to the C.I.A., he makes ends meet as a private detective in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, using two pool tables as his office furniture. Well, one day in walks this dame called Stella, wearing a long raincoat and "a ghost of a smile" on her lips . . .

It's a long story, and Littell should be allowed to tell it, twist after twist after twist. This reviewer put up some initial resistance against the plot's ruthless manipulations of chronological sequence, the arch chapter titles ("1997: Oskar Alexandrovich Kastner Discovers the Weight of a Cigarette"), the excessively vivid verbs ("The jetliner elbowed through the towering clouds"; "He heard Stella's voice breasting the static"), the occasional fusillade of clichés ("He must have been off his rocker to think he could trace a husband who had jumped ship. Finding a needle in a haystack would be child's play by comparison"), the clammy, overcooked atmospherics ("eyes burning with excitement"; "the muscles on her face contorting with heartache"), and the heavy-breathing ruminations about identity, that critical modern problem. Almost all the characters, including stray taxi-drivers and hookers (maybe *especially* hookers, adept at dissimulation and undercover work), are pretending to be somebody else, under another name. In a "nightmarish world," we are left to conclude, "people who are broken have several selves." Why does this theme feel tired? Is it just the Jason Bourne movies, starring Matt Damon?

But, as I rounded page 300 and headed into the book's last quarter, the pieces of the puzzle began to click together and I felt myself sinking into an earlier assumed identity: I became a fourteen-year-old boy lying on a red cane-back sofa in Pennsylvania eating peanut-butter-and-raisin sandwiches (a site-specific ethnic treat) and reading one mystery novel after another. Not just mysteries—Ellery Queen, Agatha Christie, John Dickson Carr, Ngaio Marsh, Erle Stanley Gardner—but an occasional international thriller, like Eric Ambler's "A Coffin for Dimitrios" and Graham Greene's "The Third Man." The idea of reading a non-genre novel, with its stodgy domestic realism and sissy fuss over female heartbreak, repelled me, but I could lose myself all morning and afternoon in narratives of skulduggery, detection, and eventual triumphant justice. And so, to judge from the best-seller lists, can millions still. Thrillers, as we shall call them, offer the reader a firm contract: there will be violent events, we will go places our parents didn't take us, the protagonist will conquer and survive, and social order will, however temporarily, be restored. The reader's essential safety, as he reclines on his red sofa, will not be breached. The world around him and the world he reads about remain distinct; the partition between them is not undermined by any connection to depths within himself. At this same age, I remember, I looked into Joyce's "Ulysses" and Orwell's "1984" and was badly shaken by the unmistakable impression that these suffocating, inescapable worlds were the same one I lived in.

To complain of thrillers, or romances, that they are less than real is to invite several counter-charges. It could be said that a book like "Legends" consummately achieves a novel's basic purpose, implicit in its name, of bearing news. Littell, a former reporter, is generous in the amount of data he provides about not just guns, explosives, and the procedures of terrorism (how to plant a bomb in a dead dog), the battle of Fredericksburg, the Civil War nursing career of Walt (known to his soldier friends as Walter) Whitman, chess, Lithuanian history, Russian as spoken with a Polish accent, and so on; he persuasively conjures up a desolate ruined island in the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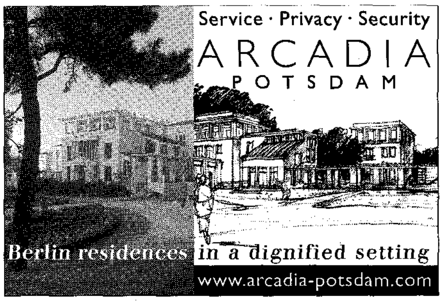
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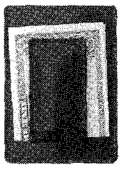
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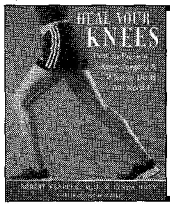
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sadly depleted Aral Sea, top-secret conference rooms in Washington and Tel Aviv, and a medically vivid simulacrum of Osama bin Laden. Facts, fascinating facts, are the bones of his fable, and who doubts that the C.I.A. really exists and that describing how nations and corporate entities relate to one another brings more important news than describing the relations of mere individuals? On the other hand, it could be argued that all fiction is escapist: by its means we escape our own heads and lives and enter into other heads and lives. Whether the head belongs to a Hobbit in Tolkien or to one of Virginia Woolf's sensitive, externally unadventurous women does not change the nature of the escape: what gives relief and pleasure in fiction is its otherness. It can hardly help being other, no two sets of experience being identical: an American finds in English fiction a different slant and social atmosphere, and a realistic Victorian novel like "Middlemarch" develops, as electricity and automobiles overtake reality, a refreshing strangeness.

The slippery difference between a thriller and a non-thriller would hardly be worth groping for did not the thriller-writers themselves seem to be restive—chafing to escape, yearning for a less restrictive contract with the reader. They write longer than they used to, with more flourishes. Nothing in Agatha Christie's brilliantly compact, stylized, and efficient mysteries suggests that larger ambitions would have served her; the genre in its lean classic English form fit her like a cat burglar's thin black glove. But Littell and le Carré and the estimable P. D. James give signs of wanting to be "real" novelists, free to follow character where it takes them and to display their knowledge of the world without the obligation to provide a thrill in every chapter. The hero of "Legends" at times shows sympathetic depths but in the end turns into a killing machine as remorseless as the novel's savage opening vignette. The heroine never comes clearer than that ghost of a smile and the three shirt buttons she tends to leave undone. The villainess, Bondishly named Crystal Quest, chews ice, literally—cold-blooded, eh? The amorous dialogue, the little there is of it, feels painfully awkward, if not at bottom hostile, and the rest creaks like an oxcart under its burden of conveying data. A random sample:

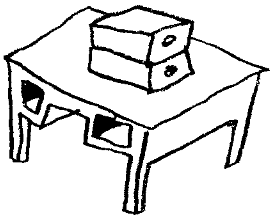
> "In the early nineteen-eighties," Kastner explained, "Ugor-Zhilov was a small-time hoodlum in a small pond—he ran a used-car dealership in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. He had a KGB record: He'd been arrested in the early seventies for bribery and black market activities and sent to a gulag in the Kolyma Mountains for eight years" [and so on, for sixteen more lines of type].
>
> "You seem to know an awful lot about Tzvetan Ugor-Zhilov," Martin observed.
>
> "I was the conducting officer in charge of the investigation into the Oligarkh's affairs."
>
> Martin saw where the story was going. "I'll take a wild guess—he paid off the Sixth Directorate."

"Legends" patiently details the labor of espionage; in turn, the reading of it can be laborious. Various checkpoints of the intricate plot are repeated almost in toto, lest the reader carefreely lose track and, like a scholar in springtime, gaze out the window at the birds and trees of the non-espionage world. Espionage, this novel implies, borders on the tragic, hollowing out a man so that he no longer feels real to himself. The games the C.I.A. would play with the world take on, in the plot's developments, a megalomaniacal hubris. Littell, and history with him, has come a long way since 1973, when "The Defection of A. J. Lewinter" marked his début. That novel is airy and comic, speedy and understated; it shares many grim ingredients with "Legends," including a C.I.A. whose presumptuous meddling destroys lives, but it has a warmth in its portraits of Russia and individual Russians that extends to the American heroine and her romantic involvement in the machinations of the state. The passage of time, too, as with "Middlemarch," has added a nostalgic patina. More than thirty years later, the MIRVs and missile defense at the heart of the intrigues around Lewinter have faded from the foreground of our anxieties. The Cold War, surprisingly, had an end, and the U.S.-U.S.S.R. rivalry did not produce a nuclear holocaust. Now we fear not missiles sent forth by a government playing at brinkmanship but loosely sponsored suicide missions that turn passenger jets into missiles. An opaque seethe of religious animus and insatiable grievance has replaced the hidden counsels of the Kremlin, whose inhabitants, in softening retrospect, became over time fellow-conspirators of a sort, enemies whose fears and aspirations mirrored our own. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

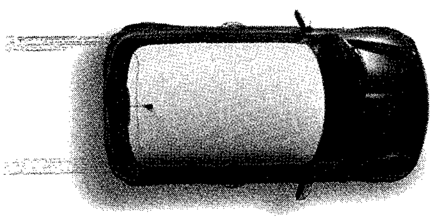
It's All Right Now, *by Charles Chadwick (HarperCollins; $25.95).* Returning from a trip abroad, Tom Ripple, the diarist narrator of this lengthy début, reflects, "I seem mainly to have recorded trivia, like someone who witnesses an epic battle and sees only the surrounding scenery." Trivia, indeed, consumes many of Tom's musings, but Chadwick's achievement is such that Ripple's small thoughts—slight observations, petty miseries, daily regrets—come to seem worthy of center stage. From young parenthood to early retirement and beyond, Tom gives a painstaking, and often profoundly unflattering, account of his inner life. He loathes his wife and his boss, feels baffled by his children, and lusts after almost every female form. As time passes, however, his understanding is deepened by both loss and success. Following him on this journey may require more stamina than some readers can spare, but, as in life, to reach the end is to complete a story at once ordinary and unique.

The Wonder Spot, *by Melissa Bank (Viking; $24.95).* This latest volume of relationship porn—Bank's first novel was the hugely popular "The Girls' Guide to Hunting and Fishing"—bares the intimate life of Sophie Applebaum, the chronically indecisive middle child of an unremarkable suburban family. As her brothers make their ways through the world, one becoming a doctor and "Torah-thumper," and the other making films and an advantageous marriage, Sophie drifts through a series of careers, friendships, and romantic entanglements, never quite knowing what she wants or how to go after it. There's a warmth and a winning lack of pretension in Bank's writing, but, like her protagonist, she can't seem to muster the energy to take her interests further than flirtation. Characters surface and vanish before we get to know them, and New York is rendered in half-hearted descriptions like "He tells me that we're going to Williamsburg, the section of Brooklyn that's been called the New Downtown."



Ogden Nash, *by Douglas M. Parker (Ivan R. Dee; $27.50).* A fixture of this magazine for many decades, Ogden Nash was a nimble master of light verse. He abandoned early dreams of literary greatness, and chose, he once said, to become "a good bad poet, rather than a bad good poet." Blessed with a gentle, deflationary wit, Nash took aim at what he called the "minor idiocies of humanity," skewering the affectations of middle-class American life. Parker's sympathetic appraisal reveals a man of adaptable talents; a dabbler in Hollywood and the musical theatre, Nash collaborated with Kurt Weill and S. J. Perelman on the 1943 Broadway hit "One Touch of Venus." His popularity waned in later years, but he became a deft entrepreneur, tirelessly crisscrossing the country for speaking engagements and penning ditties for Hallmark cards, in order to keep his family in what he felt was the appropriate style.

A Mirror in the Roadway, *by Morris Dickstein (Princeton; $26.95).* In twenty lucid and insightful essays, Dickstein celebrates the enduring power of the novel and, in opposition to the preoccupations of post-structuralist critics, highlights its "tissue of correspondence to the real world." Dickstein paints in broad strokes, providing brief biographical portraits of a diverse group of writers and their cultural moments. The essays on Bellow and Fitzgerald are especially fine. While an essay on magical realism focusses on the social world of García Márquez's work perhaps to the exclusion of the vibrancy of his language, Dickstein generally succeeds in showing how richly aesthetic and social considerations inform each other. The ability of the imagination to constitute an interpretable but nevertheless real world is, for Dickstein, the core of literary work. In this, he writes, "I rejoice to concur with the common reader."



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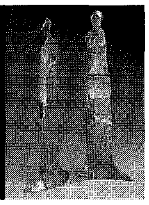

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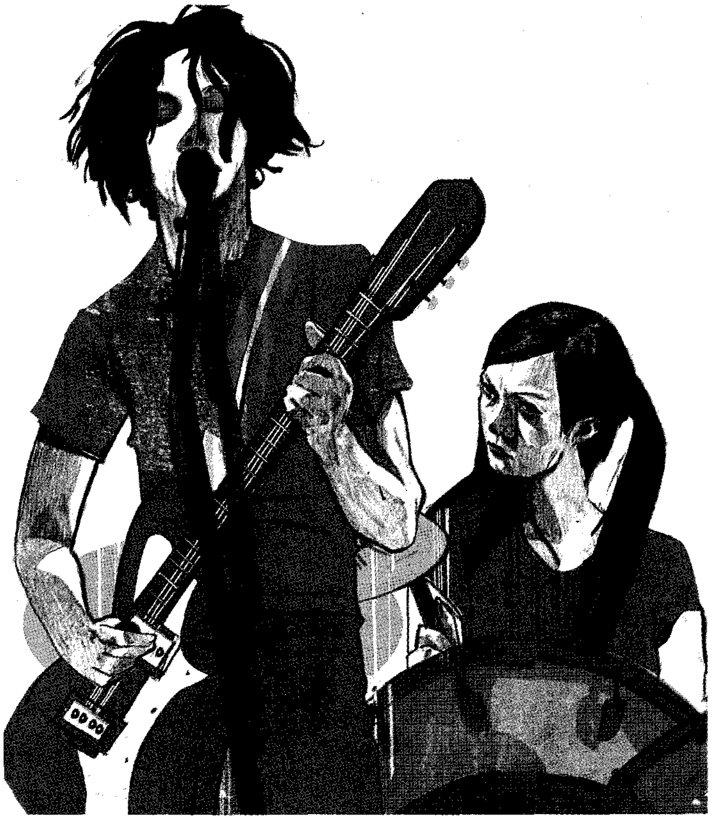
POP MUSIC

THE GIFT & THE CURSE

Jack White's vexing brilliance.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Jack White, the singer, guitarist, and songwriter of the White Stripes, started the duo, with Meg White on drums, in Detroit in 1997. The early albums were made with cheap gear on small budgets for Sympathy for the Record Industry, a respected indie label, and drew their inspiration from the blues, the most American of pop forms. While the group built an audience, White worked as an upholsterer, and the pair tinkered with their identities, teasing an increasingly adoring press with the myth of being siblings. (In fact, they were once married.) In 2001, the band signed with V2 Records, sold a sizable number of albums, and got its delightful, high-concept videos shown on MTV. (For "Fell in Love with a Girl," the director Michel Gondry rendered the band entirely in Lego.) No longer re-covering couches, White played the celebrity as well as he had played the up-and-comer. He punched a singer whose records he had once produced, portrayed a travelling musician in the film "Cold Mountain," and dated Renée Zellweger. Last year, he produced a comeback album of sorts for Loretta Lynn, a pretentious and well-meaning thing called "Van Lear Rose," and when it won the award for Best Country Album he made a charmingly sheepish appearance with her at the Grammys. As they stood onstage, White remained respectfully behind Lynn, until she finally felt compelled to say, "Jack, come on here, baby!"



Sounds at once from a noisy future and a long-gone American past.

RACHEL DOMM

White *is* likable, and he's genuinely and prodigiously talented. He sings in a high, warbling voice weighted with emotion and mysterious information, and he plays his red-and-white electric guitar as if he couldn't control himself, making sounds that issue simultaneously from a noisy future and a long-gone American past—a time when pop music was learning how to walk and find its name. White's songs are genetically purebred things, driven by simple words and a bouncy, conversational cadence that makes sense to casual listeners who couldn't care less about the band's coördinated red-and-white outfits, the self-imposed Constructivist Catholic-school uniforms. Even when a White Stripes song flirts with the recherché and abrasive, it sounds as if it had always been in the air, as if you knew how to sing it before you heard it—something an older brother must have shown you how to play one summer in the seventies, if you could just remember.

But White is as perverse as he is talented, and that keeps his albums, like the newest, "Get Behind Me Satan," from being as fun as they are smart. For a taste of the sort of conceptual roadblocks White is given to, look at how "Get Behind Me Satan" was created: most of the songs were written on piano, acoustic guitar, and marimba, even though the electric guitar is the instrument White truly understands; none of the songs were finished before the start of recording; and studio time was kept to a minimum (fourteen days for thirteen songs). The album's press release notes that the single, "Blue Orchid," was recorded only two weeks before it was released. These constraints are evidence that White thinks and reflects on his craft, and they certainly create a distinct White Stripes "brand," but how much of this hokum helps the band make music or exploit White's gifts? Is working fast necessarily a good thing? Is it as good for us as it is for him?

"Get Behind Me Satan" is like a Led Zeppelin album without the pleasure principle. Both Stripes and Zeppelin start with the blues as a template for form and mood, and then depart radically, employing nontraditional instrumentation—Zeppelin used the Mellotron, the Stripes use the marimba—and packaging the albums with high-art references. (The Stripes' second album was called "De Stijl"—not exactly a catchword in the Delta—and for some live shows the stage backdrop is the band's red-and-white road cases: a touch of Mondrian.) Zeppelin put a mysterious black tchotchke on the cover of "Presence" that had nothing to do with the blues but was wicked creepy.

The big difference is that Zeppelin's leader and producer, Jimmy Page, worked with a band of equals, who all played their instruments frighteningly well and con-

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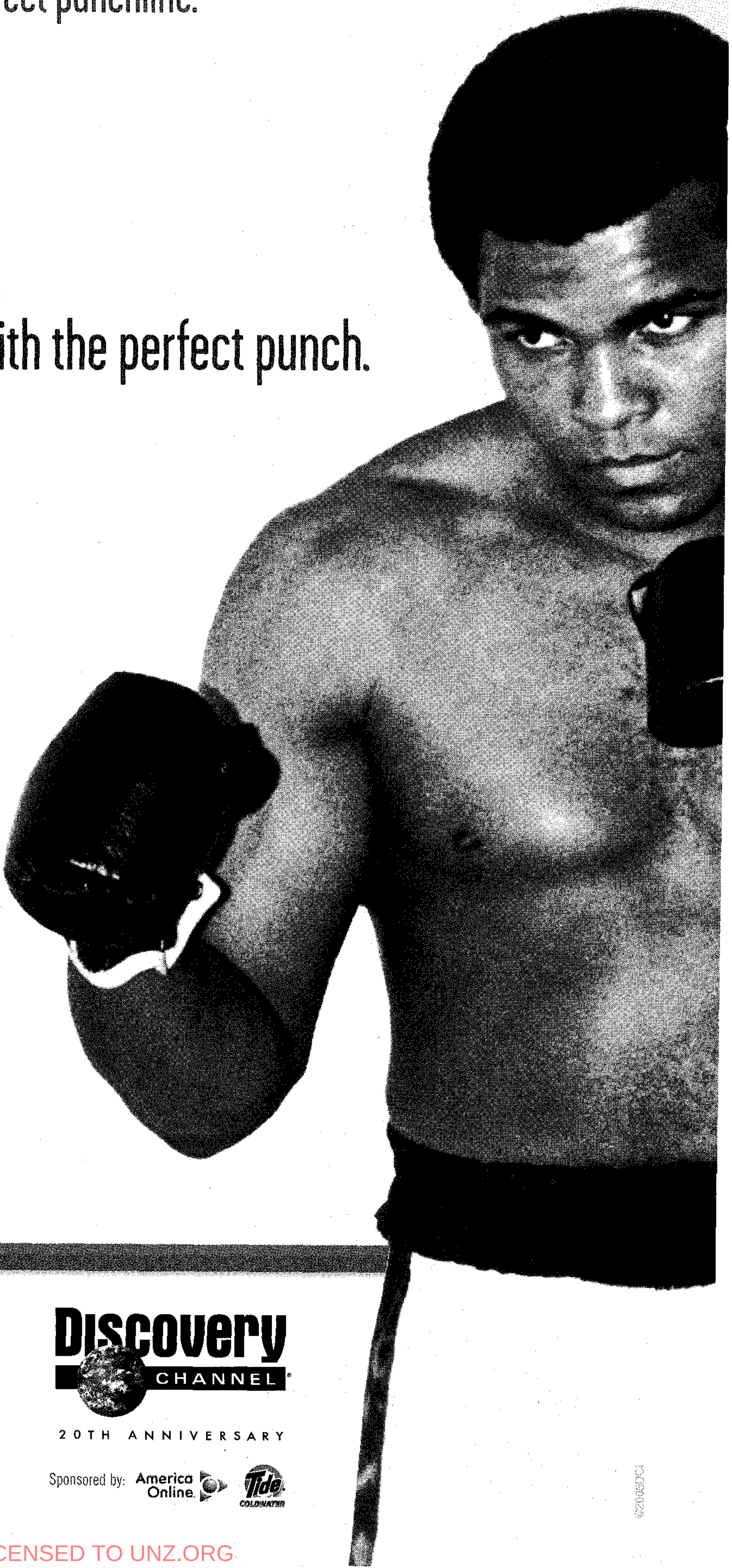

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tributed to the composition of the material. The records they made land with a huge sonic weight. White is a classicist as talented as Page, but Meg White isn't his equal as a musician, and she doesn't contribute songs. Some of White's misguided democracy may come from learning his craft during the ascendance of indie rock. He subscribes, justifiably, to the do-it-yourself and own-your-recordings ideology of independent labels, but he has succumbed to the indie-rock delusion that the idiosyncratic part of your gift (I have a weird voice, I recorded this all on vintage analog gear in my own house, I have large biceps but also look like Michael Jackson) means more than its universal aspects (my weird voice is appealing, I write great words, my songs are easily sung). White may be a walking American songbook, able to mimic Ralph Stanley *and* Burt Bacharach, but he comes up short as a producer, and the album sounds muddy and obscured, as if recorded in a room covered with wet felt. Meg White may be his muse, best friend, or soul mate, and she exudes a steady and positive energy onstage, but she is a lousy drummer and only a passable singer. (Not to point this out would be weirdly sexist.) Why couldn't White pair himself with someone like Cindy Blackman, the jazz-trained musician who has performed with Lenny Kravitz and knows from simple, thunderous straight-time drumming?

The single, "Blue Orchid," comes charging out of the gate in a little cloud of echo-treated drums. We meet a fast, distorted, electronically enhanced guitar riff that resembles a keyboard line from dance music, surging and wild, and White's high warble follows it like a twin fighter plane. If Madonna's "Like a Virgin" was an ode to the ecstasy of being deflowered, "Blue Orchid" is the angry morning after, when the deflowerer has left and taken his good intentions with him, though he is not getting off easy: "You took a white orchid, you took a white orchid and turned it blue. Get behind me, get behind me now, anyway." But the song is hampered by Meg White's flat-footed kick drum pounding through the first verse and eventually changing into an extended crash-cymbal fixation that goes nowhere. Jack, perhaps thinking about his deadline, gives us only verse and chorus, no bridge, both sung over the one riff. It isn't enough—the song wants another section, and White seems to know it. His solution? He ends the song abruptly, which keeps with his wisdom of never overstaying his welcome—only eight of the White Stripes' seventy-three album tracks go past the four-minute mark—but here it feels subservient to the whole thirteen-songs-in-fourteen-days malarkey. O.K., Jack, you're a genius. You could write a hit underwater. But why not bring in a producer like Rich Harrison, write a killer bridge, and get Christina Aguilera to sing the chorus with you? That's certainly what the song seems to be striving for.

When the album leaves him almost by himself, White gives us some fabulous songs. "My Doorbell" feels like a demo for a classic sixties girl-group song, something Honey Cone or the Supremes might have sung. Over a clumpy rhythm, White jams the words "I'm thinking about my doorbell" into three beats, and then relaxes to repeat "When you gonna ring it? When you gonna ring it?" over four beats. It's a perfect expression of the jumpy high you feel when you're unsure if your new lover is ever going to call again. As hope shades into anxiety, White's squeaky voice is all worked up and charming, and the lyrics show a canny sense for how pop can deftly exploit the clichéd images of a doorbell—the entry to his space and a thing that makes a sound, like the song. And even better is the album's final selection, "I'm Lonely (But I Ain't That Lonely Yet)," which was surely written by Hank Williams. Playing piano and singing, alone, White delivers the kind of compressed and restrained pain that country songwriters spend years trying to perfect.

If you've seen White live, you know that he's no slacker. Perhaps because he's truly possessed, or because he senses he has to make up for Meg's lack of fire, he explodes onstage—he's always in motion, hollering, choking his guitar, absolutely demanding that the music rise up out of him. Good as the songs are, "Get Behind Me Satan" doesn't do him justice. ♦

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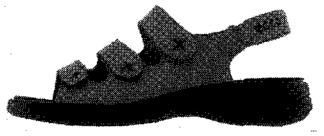

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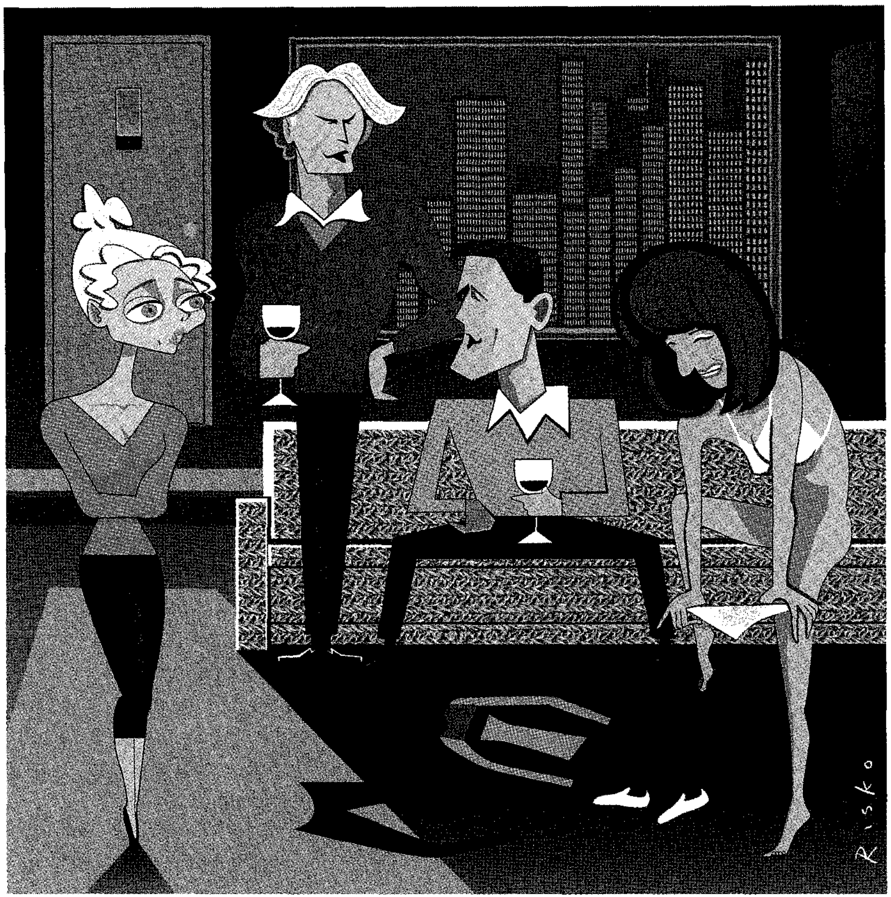
SWEET AND SOUR

Elaine May and Julia Cho dish up despair.

BY JOHN LAHR



Sexual liberation and social umbrage in May's "After the Night and the Music."

ROBERT RISKO

In the late fifties, Mike Nichols and Elaine May improvised their way into American theatre history. Their intellectual high-wire act took sketch comedy from the ersatz to the authentic, and Nichols and May became the bedrock beneath all the most probing postwar standup acts, from Mort Sahl to Lenny Bruce and Woody Allen. (Allen even wanted to write for them.) At the center of the team's humor was May's sense of daring. "The only safe thing is to take a chance," she told Nichols, who was both amazed at her moxie and inspired by her trust in him. Those issues—of trust and daring—are what May dramatizes in "Curtain Raiser," the first and most exuberant of three one-acters playing at the Biltmore, under the collective title "After the Night and the Music."

Set in a dance hall, "Curtain Raiser" opens with Keith (Eddie Korbich), a balding, pudgy sad sack who looks as if he'd just walked out of a Thurber cartoon, asking the unbiddable barfly Gloria (J. Smith-Cameron) for a mercy dance. "No one will dance with me," says Keith, who claims to have been a dance instructor a hundred pounds ago. The severe Gloria, with her black pants suit, black shoes, and black hair, looks like a lesbian Lash La Rue; she cold-shoulders Keith, saying, "I'm gay. I don't dance well. And I can only lead." Keith counters, "It doesn't matter to me who leads and who follows. I'll improvise—you'll look magnificent." And, after a while, she does. At one point early in the dance, Gloria spins Keith,

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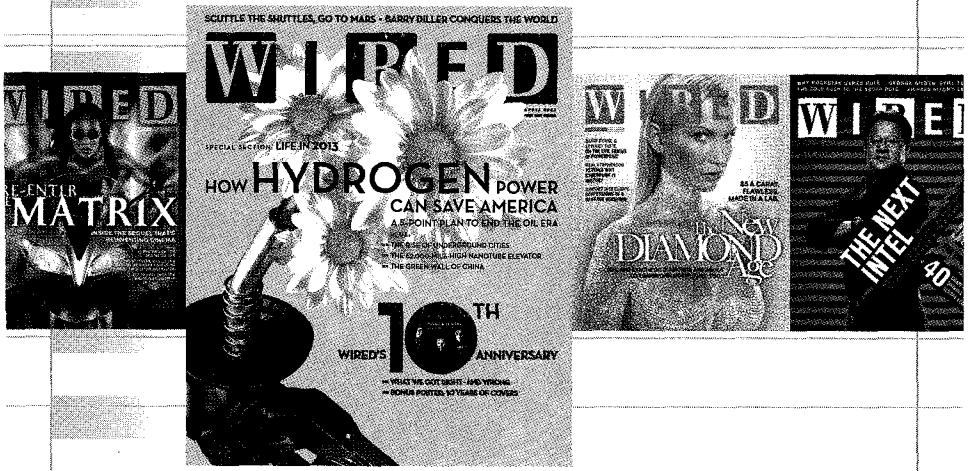

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and he twirls himself out and back into her arms. "Jesus! How do you do that?" she says. "I imagine myself in a skirt," he replies. "And, more important, I trust that you'll bring me back safely."

As Keith, the portly Korbich sashays around the stage, light on his feet but not in his loafers. "Are you gay?" Gloria asks as they glide. "I'm not attractive enough to be gay," he replies. "It's hard enough getting a woman if you look like this. Men are much more demanding." The dance is not just a metaphor but a catalyst for change. As the couple dip, twirl, and break, increasing trust brings increasing prowess. It's an exhilarating spectacle, and it charms the audience as much as it does the other dancers onstage, one of whom happens to be Gloria's lover, Brittany (Deirdre Madigan). When Brittany asks Keith, who has suddenly found some confidence, to dance with her, he declines. "I'm sorry, ladies," he says as a waltz begins. "I already have a partner." He shows Gloria the man's part, counting her in while singing, "Imag-ine your-self in a skirt—two—three . . ." The joke, it seems to me, could use the punch of a blackout, but the director, Daniel Sullivan, follows May's stage directions and draws the moment out. Gloria picks up the count, and she and Keith swirl around the stage as the lights fade. This doesn't spoil the fun, but it does smudge the stage picture.

By the end of "Curtain Raiser," Gloria and Keith are taking their physical cues from each other in much the same way that Nichols and May did in their comedy heyday. "For me, it depended on a certain connection with Elaine," Nichols said of their improvisations, "and a certain mad gleam in either her or my eyes when we knew something was starting." The inspiration, in other words, lies in being seen by your partner. In "Giving Up Smoking," a series of linked monologues, May tries, less successfully, to demonstrate the opposite proposition: the entropy of being unseen. Here, however, she can't find a metaphor to turn wordy solitude into theatrical event. Joanne (Jeannie Berlin), Sherman (Jere Burns), Kathleen (Smith-Cameron), and Mel (Brian Kerwin)—who are, respectively, desperate, gay, dying, and divorced—all sit by the phone, locked in the whining static of their own neuroses. From their tortured isolation, they fire words at us—

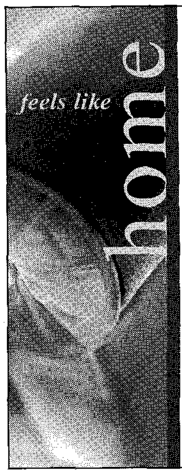
a process that has its occasional pleasures, especially in the hands of Berlin, May's daughter and deadpan doppelgänger, who scourges the world with her mother's cunning flat nasal delivery. "Here's why I'm not depressed," Joanne begins. "I'm healthy, I have a job, I don't have to lose any more weight—if I stop eating now—I'm not deformed, the divorce was bad but at least I don't have children who were scarred by it. And I'm not sixteen. Or eighteen. Or thirty." She continues, "The other great thing about getting older is that you finally know that life has no meaning." Joanne is, you might say, a demoralized feminist. "Let's face it," she says. "If women didn't sit by the phone waiting for guys to call, why would you need a women's movement?" Still, despite the flares of May's wit—"If Heathcliff were alive today, he'd be on Zoloft"—there's no dramatic engine to pull this vehicle out of its narrative rut.

"The nice thing is to make an audience laugh and laugh and shudder later," May has said. As "Swing Time," the third offering, opens, with Mitzi (Smith-Cameron) and Darryl (Burns) readying themselves for a little wife-swapping with their best friends, Ron (Kerwin) and Gail (Berlin), the audience shudders almost immediately. Throughout the characters' pre-orgy preparations—the food, the clothes, the décor, the agonizing, over-the-top seductive attitudes—May is simply indulging her own scathing snobbery. She attacks her petit-bourgeois characters for their shallowness; the couples here have wild dreams but empty hearts. "I want to have sex with someone and you," Darryl tells his wife, who has first-night jitters. "I want us to share it. It wouldn't mean anything without you." Ron, it turns out, has a little obsessive-compulsive thing about food (no food group on his plate can touch another), and Gail, who is an aerobics instructor, has a tight body and a slack brain. "Would you please take your hand off my breast while you fight with your wife?" she says to Darryl, whose mocking of Mitzi begins as soon as Ron touches her. Mitzi and Ron decide to move into the bedroom, but Gail objects to being left alone in the living room with Darryl. "I have this great body," she says. "I don't want to get undressed for one person."

As the orgy begins, Ron and Gail accidentally learn that their best friends have a second telephone number that they've never been told about, and sexual liberation gives way to social umbrage. The evening ends with as much clout as a game of spin the bottle. Fiasco, however, draws Darryl and Mitzi closer together. "Before tonight I was just this invisible, middle-aged woman who lived on the wrong side of Bloomingdale's," Mitzi says. "And now . . . I've hurt people. I'm a heartbreaker." She adds, "Come here, you powerful, shy, little alpha male!" May's observations of psychosexual insecurity are acute, but, like the orgy itself, the play promises more pleasure than it delivers.

Julia Cho's "BFE" (at Playwrights Horizons) is a tale of sound and fury told by a fourteen-year-old, Panny (Olivia Oguma), and signifying less than meets the eye. The title stands for "Bum Fuck Egypt"—the narrator's sour little joke about the Southwestern suburban wasteland where she, her mother, and her uncle are living out their aimless days. The story that Panny has to tell is of her abduction and assault by the town ne'er-do-well. "I wasn't his type," she says. "I was too ugly, even for him." (Her attacker carved the word "ugly" on her belly.) Panny can't get anyone to really look at her: not her narcissistic mother, who suggests plastic surgery; not her twenty-year-old telephone friend, Hugo (James McMenamin); not her Korean pen pal (the excellent Sue Jean Kim), who is excited about all things American—"I have long hair the color of Coca-Cola and I drink Coca-Cola every chance I can"—and who is Cho's most vivid portrait here.

Cho has talent, but she has not yet found a form with which to dramatize the particular punishing problems of Asian-American identity. Her litany of regret in "BFE" includes Panny's lonely uncle's fling and her agoraphobic mother's clumsily told and demented romantic fantasies (in a woefully misjudged performance by Kate Rigg, which the director, Gordon Edelstein, should have attended to). Cho leaves her heroine nestled comatose between mother and uncle—three lost souls—as the light of the television flickers across their bodies and the night sky twinkles behind them. The bleakness feels young; the vacancy, however, is as old as the American landscape. ♦



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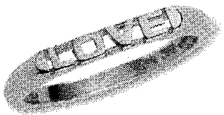
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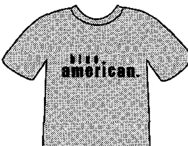

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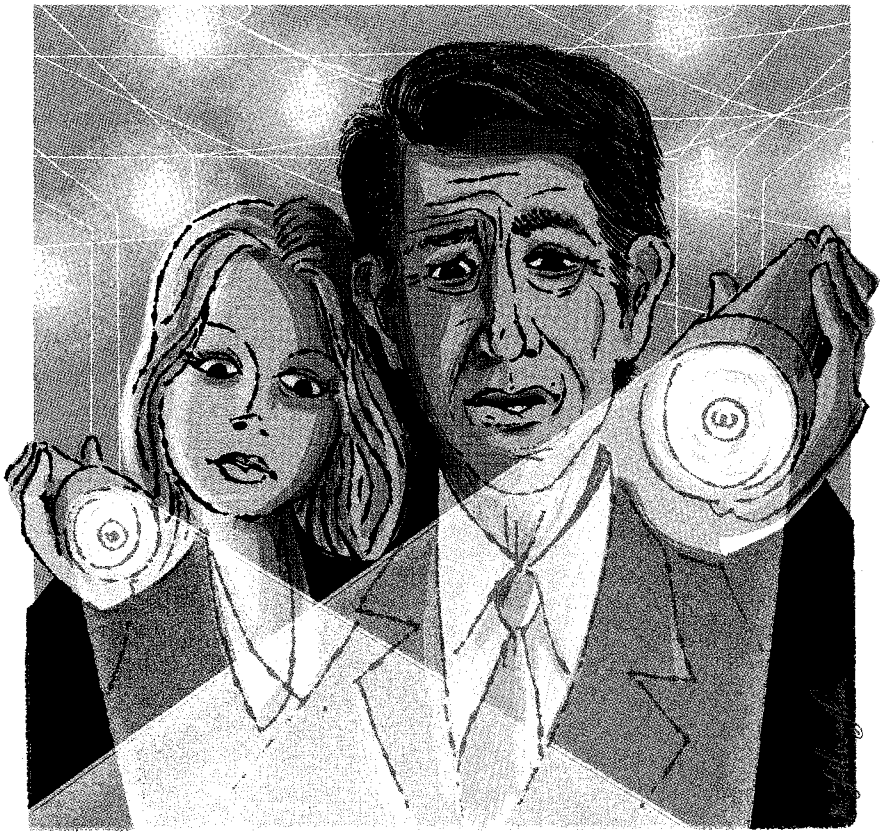
THE KILLING FIELDS

Two women lay down the law in Los Angeles.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

The new Fox Wednesday-night drama, "The Inside," about an F.B.I. profiler whose own personal history makes her all too suited for the job, wastes no time playing its trump card—and that card is not the profiler. It's Peter Coyote, in the role of Virgil Webster, her boss at the Violent Crimes Unit in Los Angeles—an unsmiling, manipulative man with what would pass in polite company for a cruel streak. Coyote has always had a strong presence on the screen, both in movies and on TV. He didn't start acting until he was almost forty—he was, and still is, a broadly engaged political activist—and perhaps his full life as a human being is what makes him seem so grounded as a performer. He comes across as not needing the attention the camera provides, and so the camera willingly gives it to him. He's a tall, trim tree, and still good-looking at sixty-two. And then, tying it all together, there's that voice: it's measured and sane yet passionate, serious but not stern or judgmental, warm but not gooey—and, amazingly, though Coyote couldn't possibly be unaware of the persuasive power of his instrument, he doesn't seem to be in love with the sound of it. Television advertisers know that you would buy anything from this man: in addition to the dozens of narrations Coyote has done for documentaries and live TV broadcasts, he has had a very successful career doing commercial voice-overs.



Rachel Nichols and Peter Coyote as F.B.I. profilers on "The Inside."

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

Still, Coyote's credibility can take a project only so far, and, in the case of "The Inside," that's not far enough. Oddly for a show that is all about figur-

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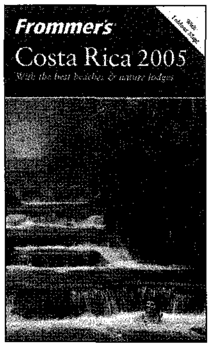

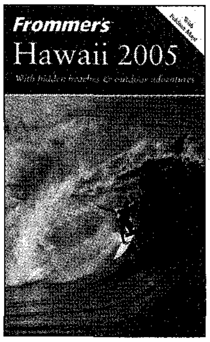

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ing out people's real identities, "The Inside" appropriates its own identity from an outside source, taking much of its tone and substance from "The Silence of the Lambs." ("Chinatown," of course, continues to influence almost every TV show that's set in Los Angeles: the agents in "The Inside" work in the Hollis Mulwray Federal Building, a reference to the good guy in that movie, the engineer whose incorruptibility leads to his murder.) Like Jodie Foster's Clarice Starling in "Silence," Rebecca Locke (Rachel Nichols) is a single woman who is devoted to her job, and who clearly bears psychic wounds from childhood that are deeper than the ones the rest of us struggle with. Nichols looks more than a little like a young Foster, too, with her straight blond hair, her somewhat childlike toothiness, and a direct gaze that conveys an essential inwardness.

The story in the first episode, which airs June 8th, also echoes "Silence." At the beginning of the show, a woman is found dead in a dark, abandoned house that's about to be demolished, her hands "degloved," as the investigators say—a word describing all too vividly the stripping of the skin from the flesh—and her face half sliced off, as if the killer's work had been interrupted. Horribly, the victim this time is an agent who was part of the team investigating a string of similar killings. Locke is brought in from Washington, D.C., to replace the dead agent, and she gets no welcome from her new colleagues: Paul Ryan (Jay Harrington, late of the WB's "Summerland"), Danny Love (Adam Baldwin), and the jauntily named Melody Sim (Katie Finneran, who won a Tony three years ago for her performance in the revival of "Noises Off"). The only one who is even nominally friendly is Ryan, who's cynical about Webster, and tells Locke that each one of them is there only because he or she has something that Webster lacks. What Ryan has, according to him—and unlike Webster—is "a conscience." It's not clear what Love has to offer, other than scowls and sarcasm; when Locke offers an unlikely theory about the killing, he actually calls her Clarice Starling to her face. Sim, in the first three episodes, is underused, though something of her personality bursts through in the third, when she dubs a man who has been obsessively identifying potential serial killers, and

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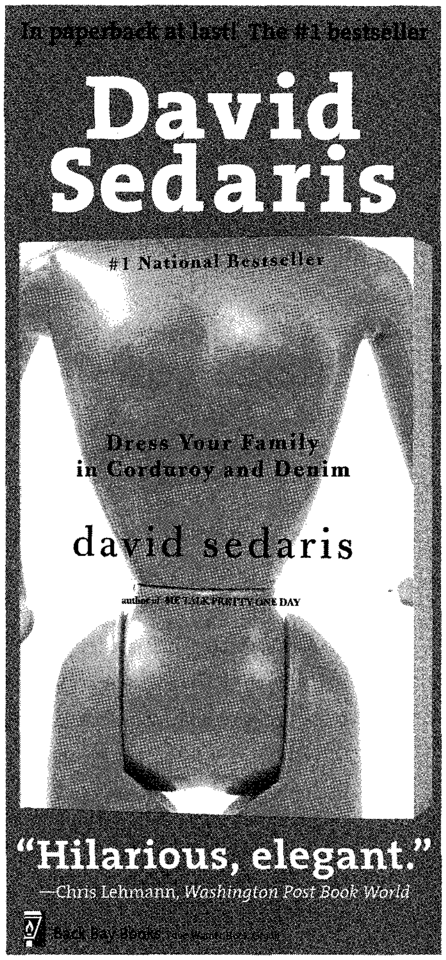
then killing them before they can do any harm, a "pre-filer." Webster takes note of the neologism, and she brightens and says, "You like? That's mine." Later in the show, when someone else uses the word, she mouths something similar to him, again showing pride of ownership. This is one of the few times in "The Inside" when you can actually see the lust for the chase, the will to win, that is at least part of what drives the agents. Ryan and Love sulk around, complaining about Webster, and Ryan takes on, unsolicited, the role of Locke's protector. He finds out her secret in the first episode: when she was ten, she was abducted—taken from her bedroom at night—and held captive for eighteen months before she managed to escape.

So Locke is wounded, and because of it, according to Webster, not simply more sensitive but more skillful, better at her job. (Webster also believes that the dead agent's illness—she suffered from bipolar disorder—was part of the reason that she was good at what she did.) Ryan accuses Webster of taking advantage of Locke's vulnerability, and he responds with angry self-justification: "This girl has a gift, Paul, forged in pain. And she wants me to use her." These lines, forged in tin, betray the possibly fatal flaw of "The Inside": it makes too easy an equation between people's talents and their pain. You'd expect a top F.B.I. agent in 2005 to be a little more sophisticated.

Locke herself comes across as more blank than introspective—someone whose words are the product not of rumination but of writers. (The creators of the show, and two of its writers, are Tim Minear, who was a writer and producer on "Angel," and Howard Gordon, who was a writer and producer on "The X-Files" and "24.") In the first episode, when Locke is, at last, face to face with the killer, and he threatens her while explaining the deranged thinking behind his modus operandi—he's intent on exposing the falseness of the dreams that bring young women to Los Angeles—she says, "The joke's on you. I was made a nobody a long time ago, and by something a hell of a lot scarier than you." Here Locke is out of control, abasing herself before a psychopath who preys on vulnerable women, and then getting all up in his face, in the space of one sentence. Her gift fails her when she needs it most. She's just been fired from this new job (or so she thinks), and her dejection has erased her professionalism. This hardly ever happens to men on TV shows who have dangerous jobs to do; they may screw up, but not because they're bummed out. Minear and Gordon have created a supposedly independent woman who is sought out for her skill, and yet in every one of the first three episodes she ends up being a damsel in distress, waiting for a knight in body armor to rescue her.

This is the time of year when I begin to see a long, gleaming line of gin-and-tonics stretching to the horizon, but programmers at TV networks see things a little differently—to them, apparently, nothing says summer like dead bodies swarming with maggots. Débuting next week is another show about a law-enforcing woman riding into town—Los Angeles again—and dealing with her colleagues' resentment while solving unbelievably sickening violent crimes, whose graphic details we are not spared. "The Closer," on TNT, stars Kyra Sedgwick as Brenda Johnson, a hard-charging Southerner with a twang and a 'tude. Less than three minutes into the first episode, we see a bloated body on the floor of a very nice house, its blood ruining the white carpet. The medical examiner tells the investigators that he has already cleaned up the flies, maggots, and ants, but unfortunately he can't lift the victim's head to show what actually killed her, because "she's been dead for two weeks now and stuff would fall out." It takes only a few more minutes for someone—one of Johnson's new colleagues—to call her, with more than enough justification, a bitch, to which our heroine replies, "Excuse me, lieutenant, but if I liked being called a bitch to my face I'd still be married." This response has no bearing on what the lieutenant is saying, but you just can't stop this Dixie Cannonball of Southern sass. Perhaps Johnson's abrasiveness is due to her being new in town and disoriented. "Everything's spread out all over the place," she says on the phone to her mama back home. In later episodes, "The Closer" may unearth some humanity in Johnson, beyond showing her alone on her hotel bed at the end of a long day, eating a Ring Ding. Let her be a bitch—but let us discover how she became one. ♦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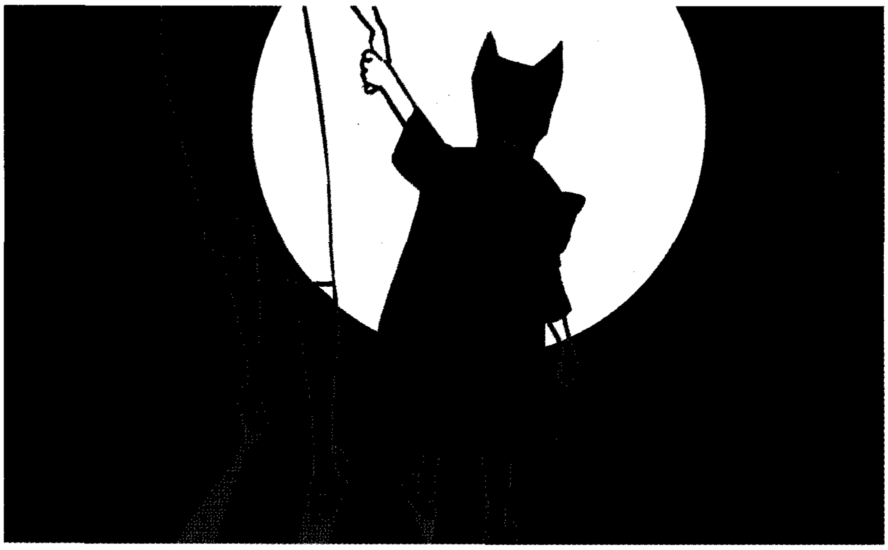
THE CURRENT CINEMA

AIMING LOW

"Batman Begins" and "Mr. & Mrs. Smith."

BY DAVID DENBY

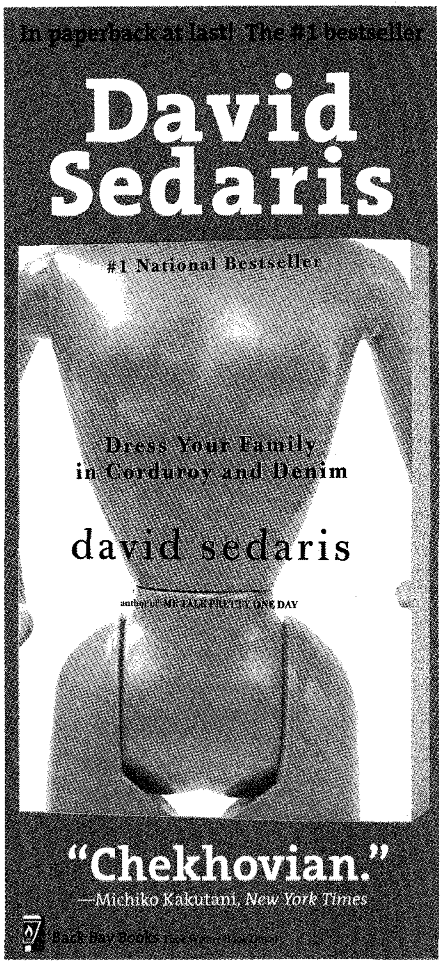
A young movie director on the verge of launching a summer hit would hardly seem to qualify as a victim, yet Hollywood can make casualties of even its heroes. Christopher Nolan, the thirty-four-year-old London-born director of "Batman Begins," first came to widespread notice in 2000, with "Memento," which tells the story of its baffled protagonist, who suffers from short-term memory loss, in reverse. Fast, unsettling, and sexy, it kept your mind on the edge of its seat. Nolan followed "Memento" with the underrated big-budget thriller "Insomnia," in which a sleepless Al Pacino and a nasty Robin Williams match wits among the stunning pale-blue-and-gray ice fields of Alaska. Nolan's early career was almost equalled by that of Doug Liman, the thirty-nine-year-old director of another likely summer hit, "Mr. & Mrs. Smith." In the independently made "Swingers" (1996), and then in "Go" (1999), Liman demonstrated an engaging flair for offbeat comedy and slangy patter. But both directors have now attempted blockbusters, and neither shows much of what was lively and fresh in their previous work. I don't underestimate the skill and tenacity required to pull a big movie together, but, from the outside, it looks as if Nolan and Liman have capitulated to the marketing demands of a system that is squeezing the art out of large-scale moviemaking.



The director Christopher Nolan attempts a Batman creation myth.

ISTVAN BANYAI

Both of these digital spectacles are aimed at twelve- to twenty-four-year-old males—the age and gender group that is most likely to turn out for a movie in the first weekend or two of its run. (Movie advertising and DVD promotion are tied to the size of the opening-weekend box-office.) Yet, for the third year in a row, audiences have been increasingly staying away from the theatres, while DVD—and video game—sales have been steadily rising. The movie business is hardly going bust, but, as domestic theatre attendance has fallen, it has become clear that the strategy of tailoring movies for teen-age boys can create a trap for moviemakers. A good part of this audience has never known the satisfactions of story and characterization and emotional involvement. How do you keep bringing these kids in? By continually upping the ante with greater



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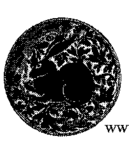
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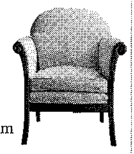

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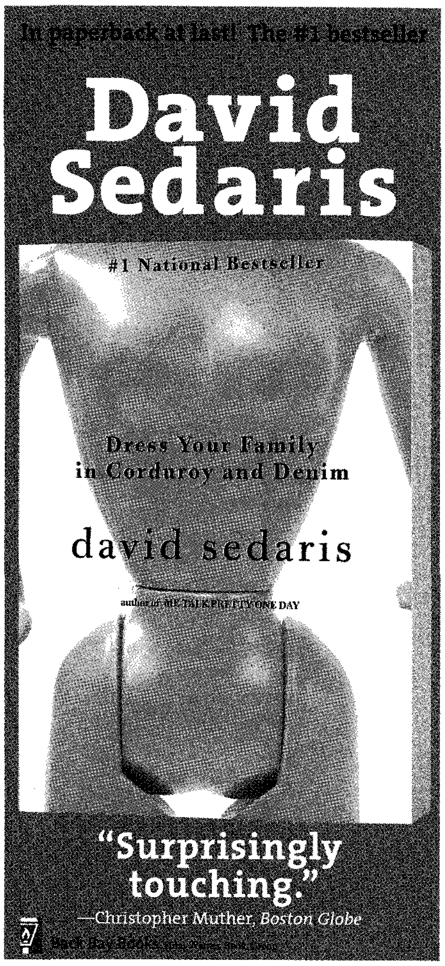

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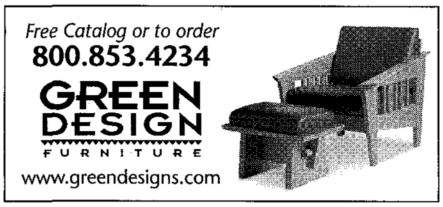

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The studios could, of course, try to broaden the summer theatre audience—or at least make more films that appeal to men and women over forty, a group that still goes out to see Hollywood movies, especially in the autumn, pre-Oscar season. Now, however, directors like Nolan and Liman, whipping their films into a meaningless frenzy, have got themselves caught in the trap. "Batman Begins" and "Mr. & Mrs. Smith" may appeal to the target audience, but, for the over-twenty-fours, these movies are so overdone and underfelt that they're hell to sit through. The directors have trashed their own work in pursuit of a dwindling theatre audience.

What was great about the first two movies in the current "Batman" series—"Batman" (1989) and "Batman Returns" (1992), both directed by Tim Burton—was the startling beauty and fantasy of the design, the perversity of the movies' complicity with darkness, and the irony of Batman's uneasy, faltering presence as the only force for good in a Gotham half in love with evil. The Burton movies were satirical and playfully nihilistic. When Joel Schumacher took over, for the next two pictures, the series became slovenly and pointless, and Nolan, exercising his ambition, is obviously determined to revive its stature. Working with a screenplay he wrote with David S. Goyer, he has attempted a solemn creation myth. The orphaned young Bruce Wayne (Christian Bale) undergoes an initiation somewhere in the snow-capped mountains of Asia, where he is trained by a morally ambiguous operative (Liam Neeson) for some sort of ninja vigilante group. (What do Eastern martial arts have to do with Batman? Don't ask.) Neeson, wearing a pointy little beard, teaches Bale to be tough by knocking him down as he tells him things like "You fear your own power, your own anger—the drive to do great or terrible things" and "To conquer fear you must become fear." The dialogue sounds as if it were written after taking a course in self-realization on Santa Monica Boulevard. To conquer banality you must become banal.

Where have all the jokes gone? This is an overly methodical and heavy-spirited movie—pop without rapture. Bruce comes back to Gotham and slowly assembles the elements of his costume, his vehicle, and his mode of operation—the kind of equipment fetishism that used to be tossed off in a few barbed exchanges between Sean Connery and Desmond Llewelyn's Q in the old Bond films. And I miss Anton Furst's urban-grotesque production design from the first movie—the curious, malign details pulled out of the night. Most of this movie is just dark, and the familiar trope of a high-flying passage through Gotham's bunched skyscrapers isn't as thrilling as it was years ago. The young Welsh-born actor Christian Bale is a serious fellow, but the most interesting thing about him—a glinting sense of superiority—gets erased by the dull earnestness of the screenplay, and the filmmakers haven't developed an adequate villain for him to go up against. The return of Liam Neeson late in the movie is a bust, and the action climax, in which the water supply threatens to combine with a vicious white powder floating around the city (the mixture will drive everyone crazy, or at least make them sneeze), is cheesy and unexciting.

The real failing is Nolan's. There's very little sense of Batman's awesome surveillance of the city from the heights; he just drops out of nowhere, thrashes all the bad guys in a whirl of movement that is shot too close, and edited too rapidly, for us to see much of anything, and then elevates out of the frame. In "Memento," Nolan and his editor, Dody Dorn, created a new syntax for movies. It's depressing to see Nolan now relying on the same fakery as everyone else.

As the married couple in "Mr. & Mrs. Smith," Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie haven't been spending much quality time in bed, so they decide to remedy their differences the American way: they fire machine guns and widowmakers and Glocks at each other at point-blank range in their beautiful suburban home. Somehow the many rounds of shot and shell never hit anyone, though the house certainly gets mussed: dislodged chips of wood and plaster fly around wildly, walls fall down in a heap, the designer stainless-steel kitchen gets severely scratched. Abandoning their weapons at last, husband and wife go at each other with karate chops and fists; Brad then repeatedly kicks Angelina, and she kicks him back—in the nuts. That does it: warmed up at last, they tear each other's clothes off. But the lovemaking lasts only a few seconds. In "Mr. & Mrs. Smith," the blissful foreplay is what really matters, and also the afterglow; the next morning, people who are trying to kill the Smiths roll a bomb into the basement of their house, a huge ball of flame goes up, right in the middle of Greenwich or Mamaroneck or wherever it is, and the couple, finally satisfied, walk away happily.

When you see this movie, you can understand why the rest of the world thinks Americans are crazy. Mr. and Mrs. Smith are both assassins who work for rival "companies." We're not supposed to ask whom they kill or why. Brad goes to a card game and wastes the other players; Angelina appears at some sort of club in a strapless, shiny, black patent-leather rig, flogs some guy in a back room, and then breaks his neck. The movie was made in the evident belief that if violence comes off as insouciant and zippy it will be taken as the latest in sophisticated fun. The stars in this tabloid-juiced project are so pleased with themselves that audience approval seems almost superfluous. Angelina Jolie, with her hair pinned up and a string of pearls at her throat, looks hot, but she flirts with the camera like an amateur, turning her head to the side and slowly lowering her eyelids. What she does here is less acting than voguing—she's invulnerable and smug, as if she dropped into the movie from a couture runway. After a few genial moments, Brad Pitt goes remote, and his voice is so inexpressive and toneless that people in the theatre were complaining that they couldn't understand what he was saying.

The incendiary marital tryst and other scenes like it are, of course, meant to be over the top; a few naïve people may even claim that they're intended as satire. The commercially knowing, however, will insist that making a romantic comedy into a PG-13-rated blockbuster for kids requires the substitution of violence for sex. The movie is a technological and publicity triumph, and a calamity in every other way. Black comedy can be icy, but romance can't be done without some sort of affection—for the material, the actors, the audience—and this movie is about as affectionate as a sales projection lodged deep in the heart of a database. ♦

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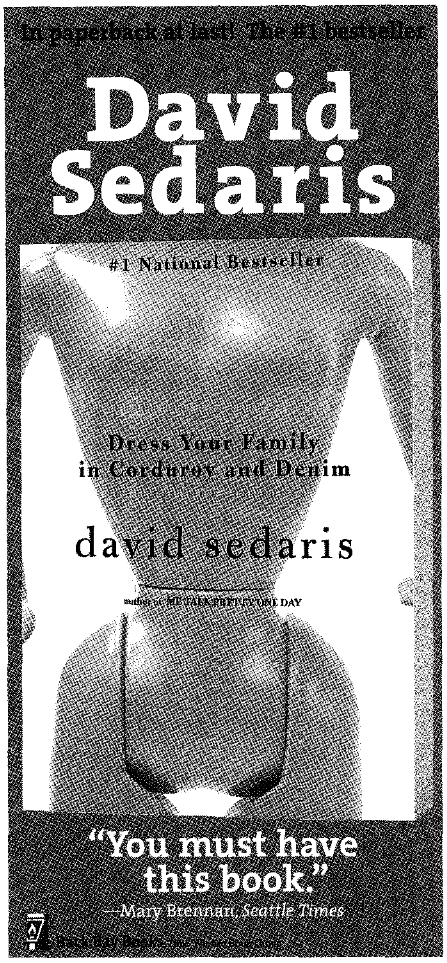

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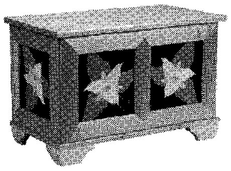
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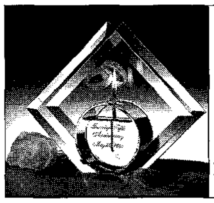
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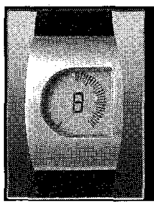
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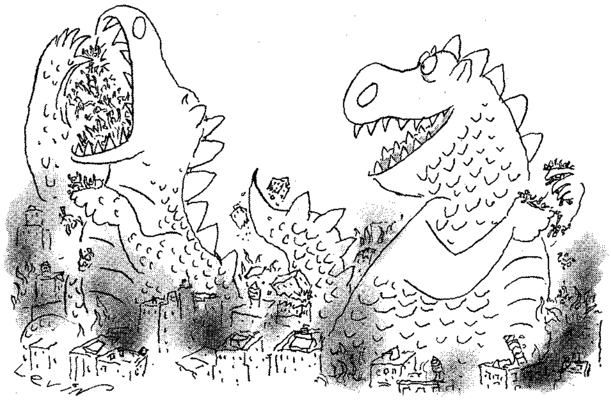

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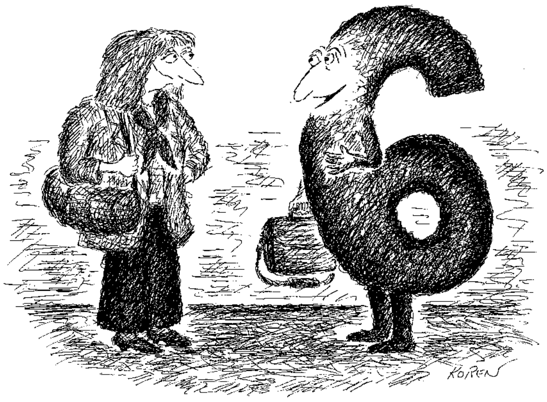
David Markham, Charlotte, N.C.



THE FINALISTS

"Last thing I remember, the guy said, 'Pick a number.' "
Robert Hemley, Burlington, Vt.

"It's me, '9,' from yoga class."
Robert Cafrelli, Aliquippa, Pa.

"I represent several Arabic numerals who are being held without charges."
Robert McDade, Bloomington, Ill.

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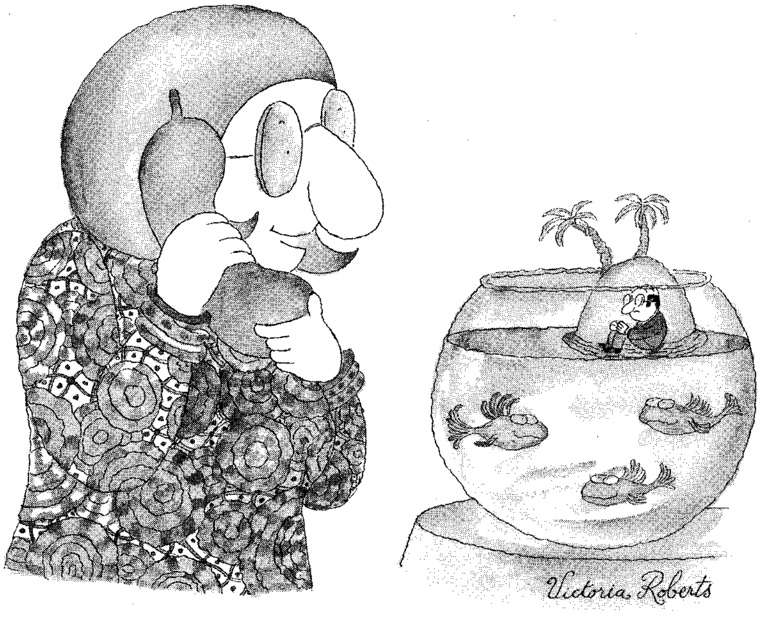

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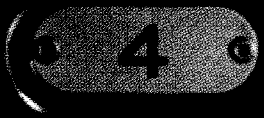

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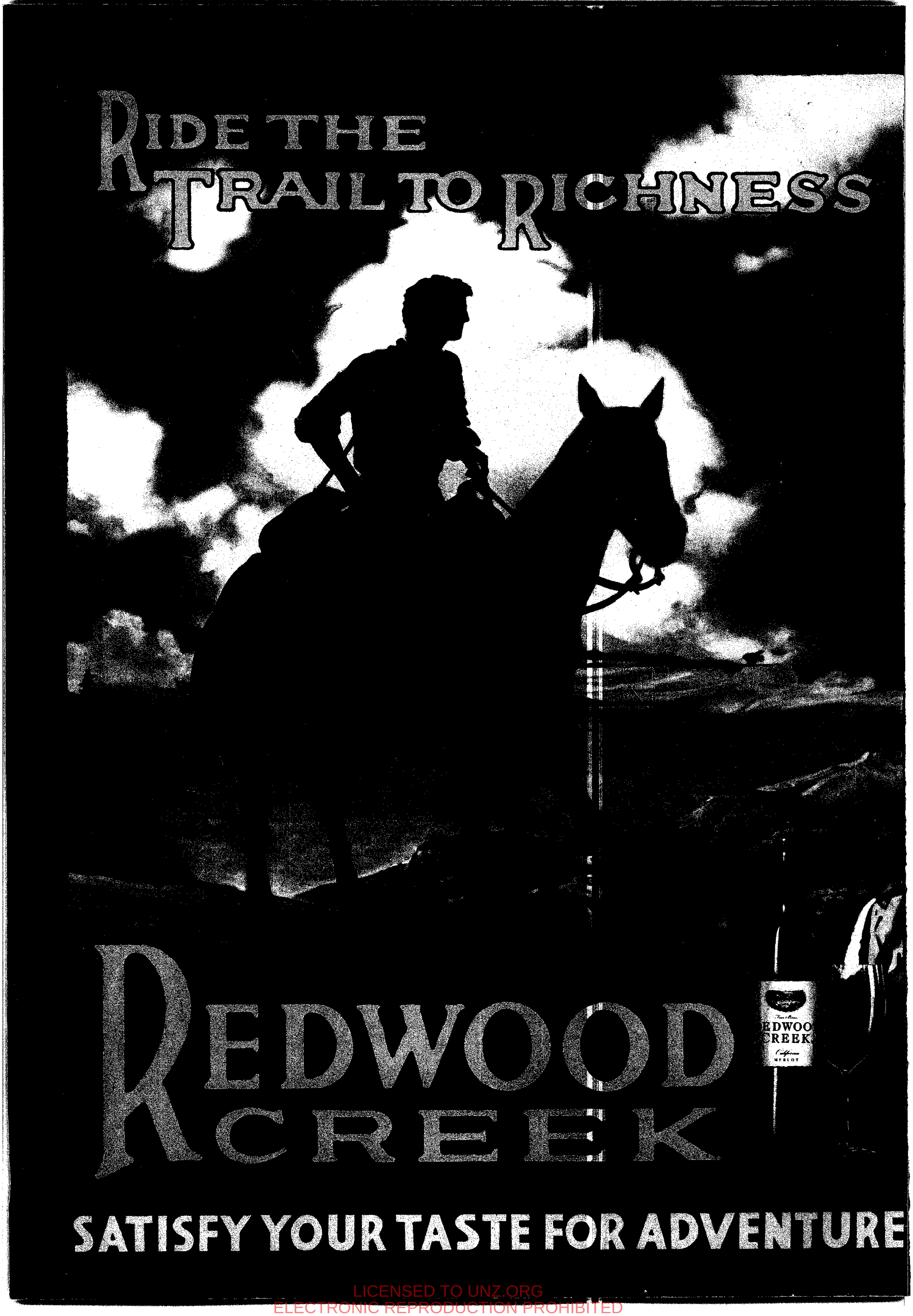
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